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Q

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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

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GARRATT
HIS TIME IS NOW!

MANICS

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OF THEIR GREATEST ALBUM

THE
1975
CONQUER THE WORLD

NIRVANA & THE YEAR
GRUNGE BROKE

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The insiders speak

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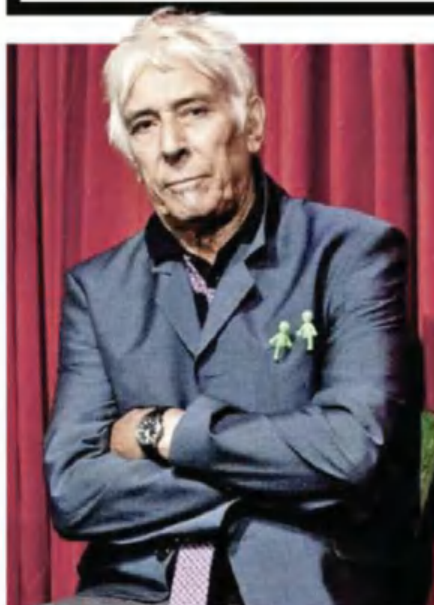
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ANOTHER OF THE GOOD ONES



left us last month. Malik "Phife Dawg" Taylor wasn't always credited as one of the all-time great MCs but you only have to listen to half a verse of any of his work with A Tribe Called Quest to know that that's exactly what he was. What stood out about Phife and his band was their bravery and a knack for veering left from hip-hop's established paths.

Alongside De La Soul and Jungle Brothers, they ushered rap music away from chest-out braggadocio and towards progressive thoughtfulness and playfulness. Then, just as everyone else was beginning to build rich, sample-heavy soundscapes, they made 1991's brilliant, spare *The Low End Theory*, pretty much inventing jazz-rap.

Most people you'll meet in this issue have taken similarly courageous, counter-intuitive leaps of faith on their way to creating exciting music. Jake Bugg has decided to rap. Jack Garratt abandoned a debut album just as it was about to be released. The Manics tore down a deep-seated band rule by writing a love song. Anohni has turned her entrancing voice to politics. Kurt Cobain looked out from the defiantly independent kingdom of Seattle and decided he wanted to appeal to as many people as possible. They all took a deep breath, ignored the caution of others and trusted their instincts. As you'll discover, it always proved to be the right decision. That's why this month's Q is a salute to the brave. You don't get anywhere by playing it safe.

Enjoy the issue.

Matt Mason

MATT MASON, SENIOR EDITOR (@MattMason_)

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[...And their own personal idea of nirvana...]

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“If it wasn't for certain British musicians of the early 1960s, the Blues may well never have exploded into Rock music as we know it today, and indeed may have passed into history.” Joe Bonamassa

Q THE MONTH IN MUSIC

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TOP OF THE WORLD!

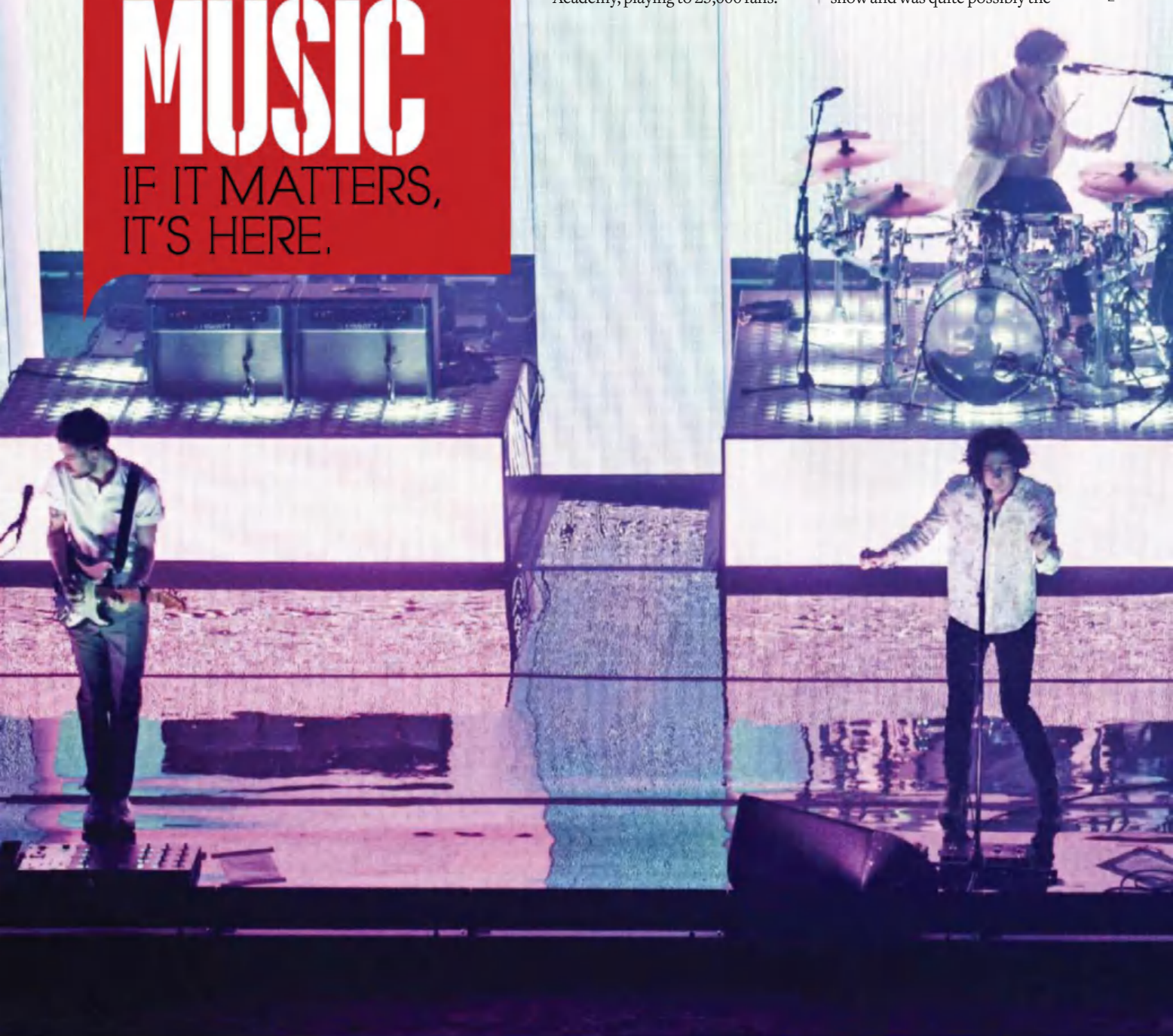
Matt Healy talks to Q about **THE 1975**'s Brixton gigs and being Number 1 in the UK *and* the US.

During one week in March, a year of meticulous planning all came to fruition for The 1975.

They kicked off a world tour to support second LP *I Like It When You Sleep, For You Are So Beautiful Yet So Unaware Of It* with a sold-out, five-night stint at London's Brixton Academy, playing to 25,000 fans.

Their cutting-edge stage set-up was as fluid and shape-shifting as their modern pop anthems. Images of skyscrapers, static, onstage camera shots and flashes of colour constantly switched between four monolithic screens aided by light panels and a giant LED display at the back of the stage. It made it seem as if each song was part of a different show and was quite possibly the

OLIVER HALLIN



most spectacular production ever squeezed into a venue the size of the Academy. The crowd were in raptures throughout and there was the sense of a band making all-conquering strides forward.

“Not doing arenas right now was really important,” says frontman Matt Healy, speaking to Q in his house the morning after the last gig. “We were doing shows where we felt properly engaged with people. It felt celebratory.” Healy remembers a pivotal moment during the second night as they were playing recent single UGH!, with its striking cityscape backdrop, when he realised their moment had arrived. “So much rehearsal had gone into the show that when I felt

that sense of freedom, I was like, ‘Fuck, there’s 5000 people here!’ It was just really fun.”

The sense of triumph swelled the following night when Healy received a text message from his manager informing him that the album had gone to Number 1 in America, making it a chart-topper on both sides of the Atlantic. The frontman didn’t quite revel in the moment, though – Healy had his little brother Louis staying and had given him the only bedsheets in the flat. He wrapped himself in the towel he was using as a makeshift duvet and went back to sleep. “It wasn’t very glamorous,” he laughs. Never mind. There’ll be plenty more champagne moments to come. **NIALL DOHERTY**



Young guns of Brixton: The 1975 (main pic, clockwise from far left, Adam Hann, George Daniel, touring member John Waugh, Ross MacDonald, Matt Healy); (right, from top) fans start to gather; “F**k, there’s 5000 people here!”; under the spotlight; “Cheers for the Number 1, guys [sob]”



"We weren't too bad, were we?" The Fifth Beatle, George Martin, 1967.



"OTHERS MADE PHOTOS, I WANTED TO PAINT."

By helping The Beatles expand their horizons in the '60s, **GEORGE MARTIN** changed what pop music could be.

When Sir George Martin passed away aged 90 on 8 March, obituaries zeroed in on his role as "the fifth Beatle". While it's a sobriquet that has been liberally attached to multiple people in the past, few could reasonably contest it this time. Producing, and often playing on, all but one of their studio albums, Martin's contribution to The Beatles' recordings was immeasurable. His background in classical music – and willingness to experiment – adding an eloquence and daring to their records that ceaselessly raised the benchmark for what popular music could be in the '60s and beyond. Put simply, George Martin changed how people approached the idea of making music in the studio.

The son of a carpenter and nurse, he was brought up in a humble two-room rented flat in

Drayton Park, North London, then in Bromley. Serving at the end of the war as a Navy airman, after being demobbed he won a place at the Guildhall School of Music. A job at EMI's classical department led to his appointment, aged 29, as the head of the company's Parlophone label, which Martin developed into a comedy label, releasing everything from Bernard Cribbins's *Right Said Fred*, to LPs by The Goons' Spike Milligan and Peter Sellers.

It was during this time that the producer recognised how sound effects and atmospheric miking could be used to elevate studio recordings into something magical. "Other people were making [sonic] photographs," he said of his rivals' approach to the studio process. "I wanted to paint."

So it was, then, that when The Beatles – Goons fans with a surreal line in humour – walked through the doors of Abbey

Road studios in June 1962, a mutual friendship was quickly formed. Famously, Martin initially thought their music was "crap", but signed them instead for their charisma and irreverent wit.

What happened next was the blossoming of a producer/artist synergy unparalleled in music. It was Martin who spotted that *Please Please Me* could be a hit, were it to be sped up from its original dirge-like pace; Martin who twigged that *Can't Buy Me Love* would benefit from its chorus being used as the song's intro. Soon, these crucial nips and tucks would be augmented by the producer's own musical embellishments to their records, including his stirring string arrangement for Paul McCartney's *Yesterday* and the sped-up, Bach-inspired piano solo for *In My Life*.

The latter illustrated the studio wizardry for which The Beatles, working under Martin's

judicious eye, became famous. By 1966's *Revolver*, released the summer that the group stopped touring, the technology at Abbey Road had become an instrument in itself, with experiments (often conducted by Martin's young assistant engineer Geoff Emerick) in tape loops, backwards recordings and myriad other trickery creating pop records of a kind never heard before.

The band and Martin's creative apotheosis would come the next year with Sgt. Pepper's *Lonely Hearts Club Band*, an album for which Martin helped pull together arrangements for sitars, tabla, bells, mellotron, piano, harpsichord and, on *A Day In The Life*, a full orchestra playing to the producer's avant-garde instructions ("at this point you mustn't play the same note as the musician next to you"). Of course, The Beatles could have made the album without Martin's guiding hand, yet whether it would have achieved quite the same game-changing levels of what could be done in a recording studio with a different producer is another matter.

Photos of the suited, strait-laced Martin with the psychedelised late-'60s Beatles with their 'taches and flowery shirts suggests four young men peeling away from their master, but, except for 1970's *Let It Be*, the producer was a supportive and faithful father-figure to the end. And when it did all end in 1970, Martin would take what he and The Beatles had learned and successfully apply it to another three decades of recording, working with acts as diverse as The Mahavishnu Orchestra and Cheap Trick. While he might never have matched his achievements with The Beatles again, he had irreversibly moved the goalposts for what recorded music could achieve.

This writer was privileged to interview Martin at Abbey Road around the time of The Beatles' mash-up album, *Love*, in 2006. Playing back the multi-track tape of *Strawberry Fields Forever*, he mused with characteristic modesty, "We weren't too bad, were we?" No, Sir George, you weren't. **PAT GILBERT**

“MATE, I LOVE A LOG FLUME. THE HIGHER, THE BETTER. THEY'RE QUALITY.”

Fresh from finishing their new LP, Catfish And The Bottlemen frontman **VAN McCANN** is now set on growing some chest hair and pioneering a new Velcro-based release strategy.

H

ello, Van. What are you doing?

I've just been for a haircut.

What did you ask for?

Summat like George

Harrison. Would I have a moustache like him in the 1970s? I wish. I'm still going for the chest hair. Then I'll aim for the handlebar.

Your new album is called *The Ride*.

What's your favourite fairground ride?

Mate, I love the log flume. The higher, the better. They're quality. Don't pay for their photos. Just take a photo on your phone of their screen when they show you the picture.

Duly noted. You recorded the album in Los Angeles. What was the most "LA" thing you did there?

I got bang into health drinks. When you drink one, you feel half-cut by 11am. It feels like a Guinness in the morning.

Seeing as you won a Brit Award this year. Will the album be covered in "BRIT-WINNERS - CATFISH AND THE BOTTLEMEN!!!" stickers?

Of course! There's no point in winning a Brit if you can't put the sticker on the album. I know it means something to my mum and dad when they walk into the shop. "Look - you got a sticker!"

California dreaming: the nutritionally challenged, bagpipe-averse Van McCann.

Would you "do a Kanye" and only put your album on Tidal?

I had the idea of putting our guitarist Bondy in a Velcro suit and have him run through somewhere where people can just tear him limb from limb - but with CDs stuck to him. Or just stick them on windscreens during traffic jams. That's the way to do it.

What instrument would never make it onto a Catfish album?

Bagpipes. I don't dislike them - they just wouldn't fit our music. It's rock'n'roll music and you don't put bagpipes on it.

You say that, but AC/DC had some on *It's A Long Way To The Top (If You Wanna Rock'N'Roll)*...

Did they? Fair play. We can just about play

our own songs and own instruments, never mind anything like that!

Now you're an "award-winning rock star" can you put extravagant requests on your tour rider like quails' eggs and caviar?

If you don't spend money on a rider, you get to keep the money yourself. So we just go and get a nice pair of shoes or boots with it. We pull up at service stations, throw a sausage roll down us and carry on.

That's a terrible diet.

Because the lifestyle moves so quick, you just never have the time. We should eat better. I imagine Springsteen's not going onstage every night with just a Mars bar in him.

Exactly. Try and eat better, please.

OK, mate. *EAMONN FORDE*

ABSENT FRIENDS THOSE WHO DEPARTED LAST MONTH



PHIFE DAWG

1970-2016

With wit, dexterity and a gift for metaphor, New Yorker Malik Taylor was one of hip-hop's great MCs. A founder member of A Tribe Called Quest, he formed an intuitive, yin-yang partnership

with bandmate Q-Tip. Between 1990 and '98, Tribe recorded five LPs, including 1991's *The Low End Theory* and *Midnight Marauders* (1993). He underwent a kidney transplant in 2008 and had been suffering from related illnesses before his death.



KEITH EMERSON

1944-2016

Keith Emerson of '70s prog-rock pioneers Emerson Lake & Palmer was regularly described as "the Hendrix of the keyboards", not only due to his virtuosity but also his onstage theatrics. Leaving '60s

combo The Nice, Emerson formed the supergroup trio in 1970. ELP originally split in 1979, and Emerson went on to make several solo albums. He had been suffering from ill-health and depression and committed suicide at his home in California.

De La Soul (from left, Kelvin "Posdnuos" Mercer, David "Dave" Jolicoeur and Vince "Maceo" Mason): "We didn't doubt the money could be raised."



600k AND RISING...

Hip-hop trio **DE LA SOUL** asked fans to fund their new LP. Not only did they smash their financial goal, but it's helped produce their most ambitious record to date.

It came as some surprise last spring to learn that De La Soul – the Long Island trio whose 1989 debut 3 Feet High And Rising remains one of the great milestones in hip-hop's evolution – had turned to crowdfunding to make their forthcoming album. With 3 Feet... being dubbed "the hip-hop Sgt Pepper" upon its release and the group arguably not having made a bad album during the intervening years, it was like finding Radiohead had been reduced to opening at the Camden Monarch.

Yet it transpires the crowdfunding wasn't due to lack of company interest, rather their own fears that the record they were making would prove too unconventional for people with their eye on the bottom line. "As we were working on it we were thinking, 'Would they be able to accept what we're giving them, where you've got a song where the chorus doesn't come in until five minutes, or even at all?'" Kelvin "Posdnuos" Mercer, aka Plug One, tells Q. "We realised we might have to look at other methods, like crowdfunding, because we didn't want to sacrifice the art."

It turned out to be a spectacularly successful move. De La had been far from dormant since 2004's The Grind Date, collaborating with Gorillaz on 2005's Feel Good Inc and 2010's Plastic Beach alongside quietly releasing three mixtapes. Then in March last year, they announced that they were seeking \$100,000 from fans for new album And The Anonymous Nobody (due this summer). They hit that target in nine

hours, eventually raising \$600,000. "We were amazed," says Mercer. "We didn't doubt it could be raised, but we didn't think it would be done in a day and then exceeded."

Mercer's boast that this LP is ambitious isn't an idle one. The music was recorded with a live band, Rhythm Roots Allstars, then tweaked by producer "Supa" Dave West. The result is an album that sounds as left-field as anything they've done in their 28-year career, drawing on guests as diverse as Snoop Dogg, Damon Albarn and The Darkness' Justin Hawkins. On Drawn, featuring Little Dragon, De La don't even make an entrance for five minutes, while David Byrne collaboration, Snoopies, came together when Mercer and partner David "Dave" Jolicoeur struggled to

rap on the main portion of the song but realised they knew a man who could sing it. "Since we finished this album, we don't know how we can go back to sampling from other people's music," he says. "We feel we need to do exactly what we've done this time around."

Manipulating their own live recordings is certainly simpler than sampling. Ongoing problems with legal clearance has meant much of their music is unavailable digitally, a situation they sidestepped by giving it away for free in 2014. "Our fans kept asking: 'We want your music, why isn't it up digitally?'" Mercer says. "We figured until the label figure it out, we'll just give it away. But it also showed how many people want this music. That was important because they didn't know if we were still relevant, was it worth going through all their sample information." As the crowdfunded new album shows, that \$600,000 question has already been answered. **STEVE YATES**

THREE CROWDFUNDED SUCCESSES

AMANDA PALMER

THEATRE IS EVIL (2012)

The former Dresden Doll raised a massive \$1,192,793 for her second album, prompting a wave of optimism about the possibilities for crowdfunding.

STEVE GRAND ALL AMERICAN BOY (2015)

The first openly gay country singer bypassed

traditional record companies, raising more than \$300,000 via Kickstarter and securing a Top 50 album with his debut effort.

TLC TBC (2016)

The surviving two members of the much-loved R&B trio asked for \$150,000 last year and netted \$400,000, including contributions from Katy Perry and Justin Timberlake. The album is due this year.

AND ONE THAT DIDN'T GO SO WELL... PUBLIC ENEMY MOST OF MY HEROES STILL DON'T APPEAR ON NO STAMP (2012)

Always early digital adopters, Public Enemy jumped in bed with Dutch company SellaBand, seeking \$250,000 back in 2009. But having just released three albums in as many years, there was no rush for another and the band had to settle for \$75,000.



Amanda Palmer: she's in the money.

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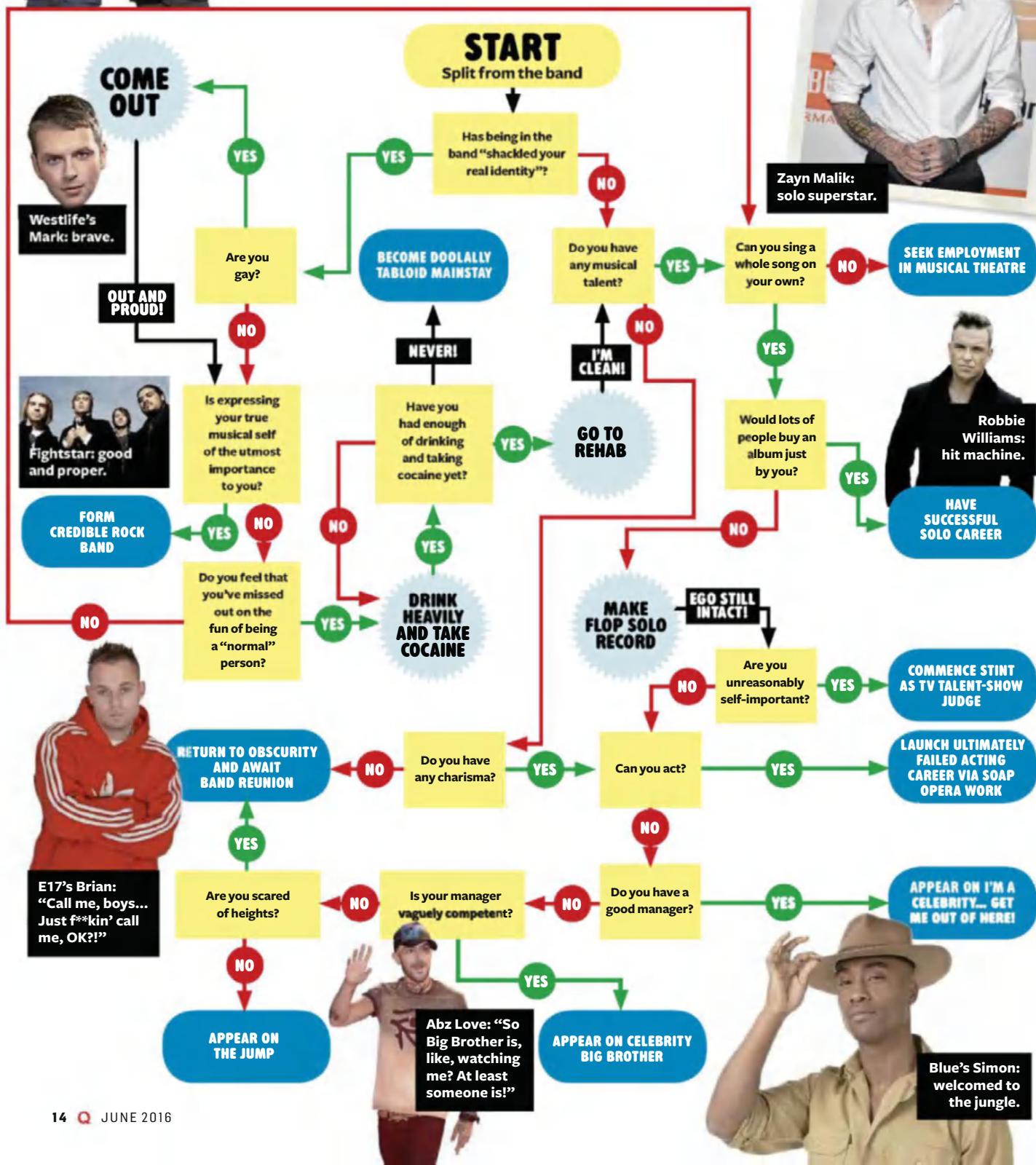
BOYS KEEP SWINGING

Boyzlife: when Keith met Brian...

Last month ex-1Der Zayn released his solo debut, George quit Union J and Boyzlife became a thing. It's tough out there for one-time boy-band stars, so Q has compiled a handy flow-chart to help these singletons through the pop wilderness...



Zayn Malik: solo superstar.



E17's Brian: "Call me, boys... Just f**kin' call me, OK?!"

Abz Love: "So Big Brother is, like, watching me? At least someone is!"

Blue's Simon: welcomed to the jungle.

SHIFTING ATTITUDES

In light of cases such as Kesha's, the music industry is finally starting to address its attitudes towards women after decades of ingrained sexism, says Dorian Lynskey.



Anyone reading the Spin website on 8 March expecting a conventional interview with The Last Shadow

Puppets was in for a surprise. After describing some crass innuendos made by Miles Kane at her expense, writer Rachel Brodsky devoted the second half of the piece to talking about sexism in the music world. "This is not about The Last Shadow Puppets," she wrote. "This is about the ongoing culture of imbalance."

Kane's misjudged nudge-nudge wink-wink humour may or may not be the sort of thing you expect from a blokey young rock star trying to amuse himself during a promotional tour. His emailed apology to Brodsky, reprinted in the article, suggests that he realised he'd overstepped the line. What's certain is that, if this interview had taken place five years ago, it would not have been written up in the same way. Many female music journalists responded to the article by saying that they'd experienced similar behaviour, and worse, from male interviewees over the years but hadn't made it public. Their lack of surprise spoke volumes about the casual drip-drip of sexism in the music industry.

When sexism is tacitly accepted, women fear they will be dismissed as uptight if they speak out. As Brodsky wrote, "In previous years, I would let men disregard my personal comfort because I was afraid of not being 'nice.'" But this year, a number of women have forced the industry to address its shortcomings. Stars such as Adele, Lorde and Grimes have rallied to the side of the singer Kesha, who is trying to extricate herself from her contract with Lukasz "Dr Luke"



Speaking out: Dirty Projectors' Amber Coffman; (below) Kesha.

MEN NEED TO CHALLENGE THEIR SEXIST PEERS.

Gottwald, the hit-maker she accuses of sexually assaulting her (Gottwald denies the accusations). In January, tweets by Dirty Projectors' Amber Coffman claiming that she had been harassed by US publicist Heathcliff Berru triggered an avalanche of similar stories that ended Berru's career in 24 hours. Most recently, the girlfriend of LA-based musician Adam Forkner, aka White Rainbow, accused him of savage domestic assault and posted photographs of her injuries on Facebook. Some record labels quickly distanced themselves from Forkner and his work (Forkner has yet to respond to the accusations).

It's essential to note that Kane's smutty jokes are in a different league to those alleged offences – they're obnoxious, not illegal – but even low-level sexism makes women feel

less welcome than their male colleagues. You can criticise individuals but what's really shameful is a culture that quietly tolerates actions which make women feel uncomfortable, and even unsafe. The familiar pattern of women putting up with unpleasant behaviour while male colleagues turn a blind eye, perhaps finding it hard to square with their own experiences, is only broken when someone decides to speak out. "There's a lot of tolerance for sexual harassment and a lot of complacency," Coffman told Billboard. "Almost any woman you know has a story that's unsettling. That's what a lot of men don't realise."

Any social psychologist will tell you that social norms are incredibly powerful. People like to belong, so they instinctively follow the rules of their group and do things they wouldn't

otherwise do. In certain groups the social stigma that normally acts as a deterrent evaporates. This might be why we retrospectively struggle to come to terms with 1970s groupie culture. Most rock stars would not have actively pursued underage girls but in an environment of enthusiastic groupies and encouraging peers, many of them shelved their qualms and took advantage. Many, I suspect, later felt ashamed once they were away from that enabling environment.

In 2016, there's a potent stigma around sleeping with underage girls but other forms of mistreating women are still shrugged off. That seems to be changing fast only because women have been able to share their experiences online and find people willing to believe and

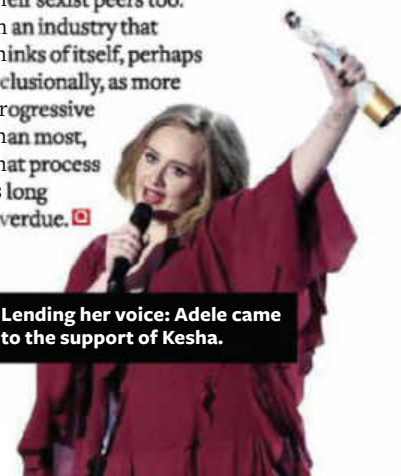
support them. With that comes the danger of false allegations and trial-by-Twitter, but such cases are thankfully rare.

When Amber Coffman tweeted about Heathcliff Berru, the publicist's former client Sky Ferreira responded, "About time someone said something." Once the silence is broken, other women come forward, norms shift and behaviour changes. But men need to challenge their sexist peers too.

In an industry that thinks of itself, perhaps delusionally, as more progressive than most, that process is long overdue. 



Lending her voice: Adele came to the support of Kesha.



Q THE MONTH IN MUSIC

Christine And The Queens,
Hoxton, London, 16 March,
2016: "French artists
are now daring to have
political engagement."



VIVE LA DIFFÉRENCE!

Already a star at home, gender-fluid Parisian **CHRISTINE AND THE QUEENS** is storming the UK music barricades with her provocative electro-pop.

Up onstage in Koko, Camden's gilded theatre more used to stinky indie guitar boys, a Parisian called Christine And The Queens, wearing ankle-cropped trousers, leans back, bends a knee and shuffles a flat-shoed, tip-toed foot, left to right, left to right, left to right. It's the kind of move we haven't seen since Michael Jackson moonwalked away in 2009. This room, she declares, is a "free zone", where we're free to be whatever we want, "even a bicycle!" Though no one takes her up on that particular offer, the crowd are soon jiggling, hypnotised, to her electro-pop stunner Tilted, a song about being different/weird/depressed. "I am actually good," she sings, "can't help it if we're tilted..." For the next 90 minutes there's something different in the air, it's also the first time possibly in Koko's history that it smells pleasantly perfumed in here.

"We saw a French girl in the audience crying for two hours," recalls Héloïse Letissier with a laugh the following day. Wearing a black polo-neck, Harrington jacket and drainpipe treads, the 5' 2" 27-year-old from Nantes behind the Christine And The Queens alter-ego is a warm, expressive bilingualist. Something new and sensitive appears to be happening in contemporary pop: not only the resurrection of the alternative female pop star, but artists with something to say, increasingly visible and vocal totems for the marginal outsider, embodied today by Lorde, Grimes and now "Christine". Already a huge star in France, she's a classy amalgam of Air, Haim, Chvrches and mid-20th century mime artist Marcel Marceau, her fans now including Madonna

who invited Letissier onstage in Paris last winter and enthusiastically spanked her. Letissier created Christine as a sexually ambiguous, androgynously dressed character to reflect her reality as a bisexual woman who eschews traditional gender labels, preferring to be viewed as "pansexual, ungendered, shape-shifting, an *energy*."

In 2016 this puts her at the heart of an increasingly prevalent conversation on gender and transgender issues in pop culture. "I'm always afraid of it just being a trend," cautions Letissier. "But I think this is only the beginning. Visibility will change minds. I'm not extreme, I don't look really queer. Now we need freaks invited on TV!"

An arts/music/dance/performance-art obsessive with a dad who teaches gender studies, Letissier grew up with random musical tastes, from Laurie Anderson and Klaus Nomi to Kanye West and Beyoncé, inventing Christine in response to the shiny consumerist culture that made her feel "ugly", demanding of her beauty, perfection and aggressively confident sexuality. "I was exhausted," she notes, "and Christine was my anger." In 2010 she fled the fall-out from a break-up to London where she found herself in Soho's drag-queen cradle Madame Jojo's. Thankfully, a cocoon of resident characters enveloped her, fed her and encouraged her to pursue her own art. She never met them again, but "the Queens" part of her stage-name is a homage to them. Inspired, she created DIY soundscapes on her computer,

going on to release her debut, French-language album *Chaleur Humaine* in 2014. Partly re-recorded in English in 2015, its sparkling pop has been met with rave reviews in the UK, her besuited persona providing an alternative to pop's hyper-sexualised era.

"I don't want to slut shame those girls for trying to fit into a system that exists, I'd rather destroy the system itself," she says. "I'm a feminist, women should do what they want with their bodies, it just lacks diversity. I did

interviews early on: 'Oh, so you're not sexual?' Because I was *dressed*?

We're at the point where you can't be sexy because you have clothes on?! Patti Smith, when she's posing for pictures,

she's a *writer*. A voice. I'd love to be like that."

Last year, Letissier posted a song online featuring a black French rapper and found her social media feeds overwhelmed with racist comments. It's a mindset she feels the Paris terrorist attacks inevitably made "even worse", but does see a positive effect. "French artists are daring now to have political engagement," she notes. "Music *can* be important. As brave as Nina Simone, pointing fingers at the wounds of America, I wish I had that."

Perhaps she already has: her second album, she teases, might unleash "my inner Slim Shady". It's currently taking shape in her Paris apartment. "I'm in a bat cave with mood boards, laughing creepily," she cackles. "I'm plotting, I'm plotting!"

Spoken like a true revolutionary.

SYLVIA PATTERSON

"I'M PANSEXUAL, UNGENDERED, SHAPE-SHIFTING, AN *ENERGY*."

CHANNEL HOPPING FIVE OTHER FRENCH ARTISTS WORTH INVESTIGATING

1 GASPARD ROYANT
Dapper of suit and retro of sound, singer Gaspard Royant's latest album, *Getaway*, is given a snappy, Northern soul punch by Edwyn Collins.
Most French thing about him: His immaculately tailored dress sense.

2 MOODOÏD
Former guitarist for Melody's Echo Chamber, Moodoïd frontman Pablo Padovani performs weirdo psych-pop numbers smothered in glitter.
Most French thing about them: Their theatrical eccentricity.

3 TOYBLOID
Parisian trio Toybloïd's Runaways-like punk sneer recently caught the ear

of analogue fetishist Liam Watson who produced their debut – out this month.

Most French thing about them: Their couldn't-give-a-fuck nonchalance.

4 LA FEMME
The Biarritz beret- and trenchcoat-sporting collective's 2013 debut album *Psycho Tropical Berlin* sounded like The B-52's soundtracking a '40s French-language crime thriller.

Most French thing about them: A film noir-like sense of drama.

5 THE LIMIÑANAS
Over four albums, boy-girl duo The Limiñanas have combined the arty garage rock of The Velvet Underground with a black rollneck- and sunglasses indoors-wearing sense of Gallic cool.
Most French thing about them: Song titles such as *Je Suis Une Go-Go Girl*.



**"I FELT CAGED
IN THE FALL.
NEVER
ALLOWED
TO SOAR."**

Let's
Do Lunch
With...



BRIX SMITH-START

The ex-Fall guitarist holds forth, over sushi, on her time in rock's most unlikely couple.

in Manchester, with no shower or fridge, the flat strewn, on her arrival, with the soiled knickers of his previous girlfriend. She wore, somehow, "rose-tinted glasses", a besotted 20-year-old living her musical dream in The Fall's central creative partnership. Many fans today, she notes, cite "the Brix period" as The Fall's finest.

Romantically, they slowly disintegrated; she'd ostensibly married her volatile, frightening father. "I picked an eccentric genius, like him," she nods. Has she heard Smith's thoughts on the impending book? "I hear he's... scared," she confesses, a seaweed sprig dangling from her chopsticks. We contemplate controlling men and Q offers up a quote from Kylie Minogue, who was once subjected to the type herself:

"They're attracted to the birds of paradise, and then they put you in a box, and your colours fade." "That's genius!" she hollers. "That's how I felt in The Fall! Caged! Never allowed to soar. But I don't blame Mark, I allowed myself to be controlled."

Satisfied, she moves on, soon eulogising on the busy year ahead: an upcoming solo LP, touring with The Extricated, her band with ex-Fall members, and her judging role in The Jasmine Awards, "for journalists who write about scent". She's a fragrance fanatic, now hoisting an exquisitely perfumed wrist, "I blended it myself, patchouli, grapefruit and smoky lapsang souchong tea; smell is our most important sense." What, then, did Mark E Smith smell of? "Pthrrrht!" she splutters. "There's something in my book, a time he came home and he did not smell of me..." (He smelled, she writes coyly, of someone else's "lady garden") "...And cigarettes and Scotch," she scoffs. "What well-rounded man doesn't smell of all three? As long as it's not human excrement and vomit!"

Suddenly, Q's phone rings: it's a Manchester number (PPI bothering, as it happens). "See, coincidence!" she hoots, standing up to leave and now gasping at our similarly sparkly boots. "See? The universe knew we were meeting today," she declares and heads off to the London underground, vibrating – indeed *intuiting* – all the way.

SYLVIA PATTERSON

Brix Smith-Start, ex-guitarist in The Fall, twice ('83-'89, '94-'96), ex-wife of maverick madman Mark E Smith ('83-'89), believes in the "vibration" of everything, be it food, people or colours. She has synaesthesia (hears colours as sounds) and is fondling a mauve wall here in the So sushi restaurant, central London. "It's shimmering, like cymbals... just as well I never took acid," she vibrates, ordering minimal lunchtime fare of hijiki and edamame salad with salmon and tuna sashimi, adhering to an energy-boosting, "calorie restrictive" diet. "And please can I have some green tea?" she politely asks the waitress, as befits the impeccably educated middle-class girl she was in '80s Los Angeles (dad a psychiatrist, mum a TV/movie executive) who once lived in a pink mansion.

She's energetic company, a silver-booted, girly-voiced 53-year-old with "a sunny disposition!", her partnership with Mark E Smith one of rock'n'roll's least likely, as vividly detailed in her memoir *The Rise, The Fall And The Rise*. "I'm not a vindictive bitch, I'm grateful for everything and I didn't wanna write a tell-all, who I fucked...well, I couldn't get away with that completely!" she giggles, today long married to fashion entrepreneur

Philip Start and describing herself via Twitter as "Musician, Author, TV Presenter, Stylist, Animal Lover & Intuit". Intuition, fate and coincidence, it turns out, have ruled her life (for good or ill), guiding her through often traumatic lifetime dramas such as rape, post-divorce anorexia, her financially ruined life post-Fall working as an LA waitress living in Bangles singer Susannah Hoffs's garage, and a second doomed partnership with maverick violinist Nigel Kennedy. But it's life in The Fall which boggles.

An LA musician and obsessive Anglophile, she fell in love with Smith over one chance meeting at a Fall show in Chicago in 1982; on playing him her solo demos, he declared her "a fucking genius". Within six months they were married, her boho American existence swapped for Mark E Smith's revolting flat

CAN I
TAKE YOUR
ORDER,
MRS SMITH-
START?



Favourite restaurant?

"Locanda Cipriani, Torcello island, off Venice. Fancy but cool."

Most hated food stuff?

"Liver. Even the smell makes me gag."

Dream dining companion?

"Robert Plant is a huge

inspiration. I saw him on the street a while ago and I wanted to introduce myself, but couldn't. I had no make-up on and was dragging two pugs."

Death Row dinner?

"I get cravings, like food crack cocaine, for pizza. So, real person pizza, Pizza Express, American Hot."



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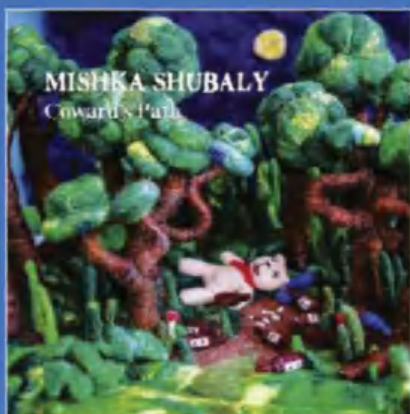
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ing with stately majesty of
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April 19 - The Hope & Ruin - Brighton, UK

Album
Available
Now

Canada

Quebec

SEATTLE CITY

MUST KNOW

TITLE: TBC

DUE: Later this year

PRODUCER:

Joseph Mount

RECORDED:

Black Box, Noyant-la-Gravoyère; Motorbass, Paris; Eve Studios, Stockport; Big Jelly Studios, Ramsgate

SONGS: Old Skool, Back Together, 16 Beat.

FASCINATING FACT:

While recording in France, Mount's diet was entirely made up of homemade soup.

Yes, the hedonism is well and truly over: Joseph Mount, East London, 14 March, 2016.

DON'T STOP THE PARTY

Despite now being a father of two, **METRONOMY's** electro-pop boffin Joseph Mount has recaptured his teenage hedonism for the band's new album.

With his unruly mop of hair, hoodie and bright white plimsolls, Metronomy's founder, frontman and odd-pop professor Joseph Mount, 33, resembles an oversized teenager. Awkwardly posing in an East London studio, he's a fidgety presence, playfully repeating our photographer's instruction to "touch a knob" while at one point semi-seductively laying across the studio's mixing desk.

In fact, there's a playfulness to most things Mount and Metronomy do – over the course of four albums they've wilfully glided between gonzo synth-pop (2006's *Pip Paine* (Pay The £5000 You Owe)) and 2008's breakthrough *Nights Out*); urbane soft rock (2011's Mercury Prize-nominated *The English Riviera*) and, on 2014's UK Top 10

album *Love Letters*, a vintage fusion of glam rock and Motown.

So while their as-yet-untitled fifth album – produced mainly by Mount between Western France and Stockport – continues this aversion to genre pigeon-holing, it's also a sequel of sorts to *Nights Out's* synth-led tales of London excess, inspired then by Mount's escape from his sleepy hometown of

**"I WANTED TO CAPTURE THAT FADING MEMORY OF GOING TO CLUBS."
JOSEPH MOUNT**

Totnes, Devon. "I just wanted to make an uptempo record," he says of the new album. "I wanted to try and do another record that captures that fading memory of being a bit younger and going to clubs, but with the confidence I didn't have then." This meant trying to combine youthful naivety – "When you get older you over-think, so I wanted to make something instinctive" – with the now father-of-two's need for routine. "The time I have for creativity is so precious now. I had two weeks to record, so it was like 'don't waste a second of the day'."

The three songs Q hears highlight this focused experimentation. From the twisted electro-pop of lead track *Old Skool* ("with a k – how else would you spell it?"), which fuses a knowing lyric about "going to parties and thinking, 'Who are these people?'" with a swarm of synths, cowbell and a scratch break by Beastie Boys turntablist Mix Master Mike, to the bongo-augmented, '80s hip-hop of *16 Beat*, which, like most Metronomy songs, finishes in a very different place to where it starts. **MICHAEL CRAGG**

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Q INTRODUCES

NOTHING BUT THIEVES

Essex schoolmates deliver stadium-ready, 21st-century rock anthems. Now all they need are some stadiums.



othing But Thieves are in a quandary. Trundling across the Netherlands

towards their latest headline show, the Southend five-piece currently find themselves with enough kudos to feature on Radio 1's A-list, sell out London's Kentish Town Forum and land an arena support slot with prog-rock titans Muse. The flipside? A self-titled, debut album of guitar-heavy baroque pop has yet to translate into any serious glamour, despite landing in the UK Top 10.

"Everything I've dreamed of?" says guitarist Dominic Craik with a laugh, positioned alongside his bandmates – singer Conor Mason, drummer James Price, bassist Philip Blake and fellow guitarist, Joe Langridge-Brown.

"I've been sat on my arse in this van for eight hours, stopping at dodgy service stations, eating Kinder Bueno bars and paying 50 cents for a piss. Give it a rest."

Back in 2014, Zane Lowe championed the then unknowns'

> In a nutshell:
Blitzing guitar
riffs and
harmonious
catharsis,
of the stadium-
sized variety

> For fans of:
Muse, Radiohead

> Get this track:
Itch

second EP, Graveyard Whistling, which featured a patchwork of distorted guitar curlicues inspired, at various points, by The Bends-era

Radiohead, Jeff Buckley and their future touring partners, Muse. It was frontman Mason's vocals that really set the group apart though. Informed by his dad's record collection, which included Sam Cooke, Jackie Wilson and

Aretha Franklin, he twins soulful, soaring high notes with heartbroken rage. To anyone who has met him, this bellowing catharsis may come as a surprise. At first glance, the cherubic and softly spoken Mason most resembles a prepubescent extra from Channel 4's student comedy, Fresh Meat.

"I'm not the sort of knob who sings constantly," he says of his vocal histrionics. He checks with Price. "I'm not like that? I'm not some X Factor twat?"

Mason's introduction to showmanship was a slow

one. When Price, Blake and Landridge-Brown spotted Mason singing in a school assembly, they asked him to join their covers band. Initially trading in "blues, a bit of Led Zep, Clapton", Nothing But Thieves' scorching 21st-century rock only came together when Craik met Mason at music classes in 2012.

"Conor was fascinated that I could play guitar at 100 mph," says Craik. "And when he sang, I was like, 'Oh my God!'"

Following a few local gigs in and around Essex, a word-of-mouth buzz attracted



You're nicked! (from left)
Philip Blake, Joe Langridge-
Brown, Conor Mason, Dominic
Craik and James Price.



management offers before the band were packed off to America to get some songwriting inspiration. "We had to go back to the drawing board," says Craik. "We'd taken two years, sitting in my miserable garage in Essex, trying to learn how to write."

The incubation period paid dividends. A deal with RCA followed in 2014, before their self-titled debut won over rock fans both at home and in the US, selling over 100,000 copies to date. Actor RJ Mitte – better known as Breaking Bad's Walt Jr – was so impressed he agreed to

appear in the video for 2015 single, If I Get High. This was followed by an invite to perform on primetime US chat show, Jimmy Kimmel, though their high-profile appearance presented a steep learning curve.

"I was shitting a brick," says Mason. "We hadn't done any big TV and I had to ask Dom when I was supposed to come in on the song. I was absolutely freaking."

They might not be luxuriating in the A-list lifestyle just yet, but given their snowballing success so far, maybe it's time to change the tourbus. **MATT ALLEN**



Keeping it realistic:
Loyle Carner, aka
Ben Coyle-Larner.

LOYLE CARNER

South Londoner evokes the jazz samples and socially conscious lyrics of '90s hip-hop.

Love and loss shaped the first 21 years of Ben Coyle-Larner's life. When his best friend died of leukaemia, he wrote a poem. When his grandfather passed away, he devised a play. And when his stepfather suffered a fatal epileptic fit, he wrote a hip-hop anthem. Cantona is a sublime boom-bap tribute to his stepdad's idol and Manchester Utd's kung-fu philosopher. It's the standout from 2014's A Little Late EP, his first under Loyle Carner, a dyslexia-devised take on his birth name.

Given such inspirations you might expect Coyle-Larner's material to be overly earnest. Instead, he's funny and forthright, with personal revelations delivered over dusty jazz samples. While much of UK hip-hop is focused on grime's pumped-up clatter, Coyle-Larner harks back to the socially conscious yet funny lyrics of '90s acts such as A Tribe Called Quest. Forthcoming single, Stars And Shards, is about an old friend losing their way, built on an old-school soul break.

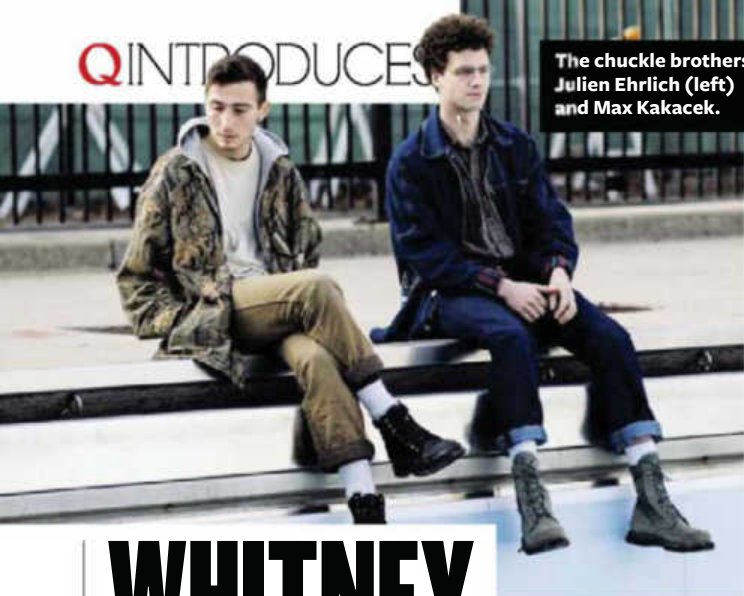
He's already supported Joey Bada\$\$ and Kate Tempest on tour, been given a nod by the BBC's Sound Of 2016 list and today is enjoying the BBQ-heavy record label bunfight that is Texas's SXSW showcase. Sitting down for a chat with Q, fuelled by copious amounts of beef jerky, his primary concern is finding somewhere showing the Liverpool/Man Utd game.

"It's honest hip-hop, about things that really happen," he explains of his sound, citing UK rap forefather Roots Manuva as a key influence. "What he brought to UK hip-hop was a simplicity that couldn't be taught. Actually, Roots looks exactly like my biological dad – my mum told me not to say that, because she thinks Roots Manuva's quite handsome!"

Coyle-Larner grew up in South London, with a childhood blighted by ADHD and the breakdown of his parents' marriage. "I was the token brown kid in the Christmas dinner of white people," he recalls. "When you're mixed race, when you grow up it's very difficult to know where you fit in."

Coyle-Larner won a drama scholarship to the BRIT School, but always hoped that music might define him. After later dropping out of North London's The Drama Centre, he began performing live, with mixed results. "We were booked for a poetry slam event in Sheffield. We got in there and it was the size of a classroom with 15 chairs and two laptop speakers."

Coyle-Larner is now working on his debut LP, aiming for a 2017 release. He wants the new songs to be more positive. "In music, I focus on what's missing: my biological dad left, my stepdad passed away. In some of the newer things I've written it's about appreciating how lucky I am." Maybe the second Daisy Age of hip-hop starts here. **ANDY MORRIS**



WHITNEY

Ex-Smith Westerns and Unknown Mortal Orchestra men deliver exquisite indie soul.

Chicago's Whitney's position as one of 2016's most talked-about new indie bands comes on the strength of just one track they've released so far. Indicatively entitled No Woman, it's an unutterably beautiful song of heartbreak – a gentle collision of funky rhythms, elegant brass, and the forlorn falsetto of their singing drummer Julien Ehrlich, which recalls vintage loversmen Curtis Mayfield and Al Green.

"Those are good comparisons," notes Ehrlich with a giggle, "definitely better than Don Henley from The Eagles."

Meeting Ehrlich and his songwriting partner, Max Kakacek, during the band's hectic first visit to Europe, the duo seem bewildered by all the attention they're getting. Little more than a year ago, each was feeling trapped in their own groups – Kakacek as guitarist in glamorous US indie act Smith Westerns and Ehrlich as drummer in psych-pop dreamers Unknown Mortal Orchestra.

The two shared a flat in Chicago, and Ehrlich latterly doubled up as Smith Westerns' drummer. They then started writing together, influenced by "old soul music, The Band, and modern R&B cats like Jeremih".

Though they'd found the perfect musical pairing, the duo were both going through romantic break-ups, so they weren't short on lyrical ideas.

"I was taking it a little harder than him maybe,"

smirks Ehrlich sheepishly, "and then suddenly it was winter and we were homeless – the lease had expired on our apartment."

Kakacek's grandfather offered them a place to crash in rural Wisconsin where they purged their woes with further lovelorn compositions. They later escaped the frost-bitten blues by recording in LA. The resultant album, *Light Upon The Lake*, accordingly has a gorgeous sunny pop aura with all that wintry sorrow aching within, like an indie Fleetwood Mac. The theme of being involuntarily single prevails on many of its songs, like *On My Own* and the nostalgic *Golden Days*.

Happily, the duo's romantic fortunes have since picked up, along with their career prospects. "There's a lot of opportunities now," Ehrlich sniggers, "and I don't expect it to slow down."

Are they fielding these like a young Hugh Hefner?

"No," counters Kakacek, "more Hugh Grant in *Four Weddings And A Funeral*."

Q can't vouch for them as relationship material. Their music, by contrast, is sublime. **ANDREW PERRY**

THEIR DEBUT
ALBUM COMBINES
SUNNY POP AND
WINTRY SORROW.

INCOMING



This month, Q's Chris Catchpole opens his ears to some Beatlesy warmth, a spot of lawyerly jangle, bone-breaking glam and hatchet-wielding electro-pop.



ANDY SHAUF THE MAGICIAN

Canadian singer-songwriter Andy Shauf has previously recorded LPs in his parents' basement. Not that you'd guess it from his lush piano pop. The Magician is typical of Shauf's sound – a warm mix of late-period Beatles melodicism and Nilsson in his more melancholy moments.

Hear it: Available now on iTunes.

AMBER ARCADES FADING LINES

When she's not fronting Amber Arcades, Dutch-born singer Annelotte de Graaf is a human rights lawyer representing Syrian refugees. Which would be impressive enough even without taking into consideration just how good songs like *Fading Lines* are. Gorgeous, dreamily melodic indie-pop that recalls fellow jangly types Real Estate.

Hear it: Available 11 April on Heavenly.

CATHOLIC ACTION L.U.V

Glam rock wasn't just the preserve of androgynously beautiful pouters like David Bowie. Half the bands looked like once they'd changed out

of their platforms and BacoFoil trousers they could quite easily kick your head in. It's that sort of no-nonsense Glitter Band stomp that Glaswegians Catholic Action revisit to glorious effect here.

Hear it: Available now on Luv Luv Luv.

OUR MOTHER SURPRISE MACHINE

Tottenham-based four-piece Our Mother create unsettling electronic pop. Peering through *Surprise Machine*'s spooky melodies reveals a sinister lyric about someone wielding a hatchet. It's not a huge surprise to discover they formed at a Halloween party.

Hear it: Available 29 April on Lucky Number.

JC FLOWERS YM MHORTHCAWL

Rather than being taken from a particularly hard Countdown conundrum, Ym Mhorthcawl is Welsh for "In Porthcawl", the sleepy Welsh seaside town. Which is fitting, given the song's atmosphere of rainy summer holidays spent indoors listening to records in its downbeat, shuffling guitars.

Hear it: Available on Spotify now.



Status Quo



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THE SUNDAY NIGHT MUSIC CLUB

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



BUSKER DO!

Sunday Night Music Club host **Danielle Perry** pays tribute to the musicians lightening our loads as we make our daily journeys.

That the world can be a scary place is no surprise. In times where caution and trepidation become more present than ever, I wanted to bow down and tilt my hat to a soundtrack and playlist rarely celebrated.

I live in London, take the Tube, take the bus, walk home when the sun shines. And all around this city, and others, a network of musicians and entertainers provide us with our daily soundtrack – often without us even realising. From Beatles

tribute bands and modern-day Dick Van Dyke one-man-bands on Oxford Street, to

**Modern-day
Dick Van Dykes
fill our streets.**

chanting and three-piece brass band set-ups, our underground stations, high streets and parks



provide a feast of music and are prime examples of how we all work living side-by-side. I always admire the tenacity of musicians, the dedication – when it's so cold you can't feel your fingers, yet lo and behold there is a man playing the most beautiful harp you've ever heard. Not only could he be bothered in the first place, he

was even bothered enough to lug his massive harp to the middle of London in rush hour. Respect. Music is all around you and you can be transported in a second. As soon as I hear a bagpiper I'm back in beautiful Edinburgh; as soon as



Underground music: buskers provide "our daily soundtrack".

I hear a fiddle and tin whistle, I'm back in Dublin; as soon as I hear the contagiously positive, smiley lady singing Bob Marley outside Highbury & Islington Tube, I am home.

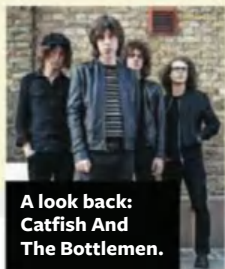
I wanted to thank all these performers (especially the tuba player in Leicester Square with the fake fire special effects) for softening the air; for easing the situation; for invigorating our souls at the start of a busy day and soothing our minds on our way home. I will never forget the gent who sang John Lennon's Imagine recently. He transfixed everyone as they travelled on the escalator, everyone mouthing the words along at the same time. It transcended race, age and religion. Exactly how Lennon would've wanted.

■ *Listen to The Sunday Night Music Club from 8pm every week on Absolute Radio.*

FURTHER LISTENING...

CATFISH AND THE BOTTLEMEN

Absolute Radio,
7 April, 9-10pm
With the new album
imminent, a chance to
re-visit a live session



A look back:
Catfish And
The Bottlemen.

recorded around the release of debut album *The Balcony*, with Sarah Champion talking to singer Van McCann.

TRAVIS ON ABSOLUTE RADIO

Absolute Radio,
9 April, 10-11pm
It's Fran Healy's turn to
host a programme – and
he's promised to get his

rock star pals on the show to help him pick some of the best-songs-of-all-time-according-to-Travis.

FLEETWOOD MAC AT THE ISLE OF WIGHT FESTIVAL

Absolute Radio, 21 April, 9-10pm
Pete Donaldson is featuring the best bits from last year's festival, with a selection of tracks from the 2015 headliners plus an interview with founder member Mick Fleetwood.

MUSE RECORDED LIVE IN LONDON

Absolute Radio, 1 May, 9-10pm
Danielle Perry introduces highlights of Muse live at London's O2 Arena, alongside an interview with the band.

SLASH'S ROCK ICONS

Absolute Classic Rock, 2 May, 8-9pm
Guns N' Roses legend Slash plays choices from the Stones, Thin Lizzy, Led Zeppelin and more!

REAL MUSIC MATTERS

**Absolute
Radio**

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digital radio

FREEZE FRAME

The stories behind music's greatest moments

ON THE EVE OF THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF **THE QUEEN IS DEAD**, PHOTOGRAPHER STEPHEN WRIGHT DESCRIBES HOW HE TOOK **THE SMITHS'** MOST FAMOUS PICTURE.

One day in November, 1985, I got a call from The Smiths' label, Rough Trade, asking me if I could go to Salford and take some pictures of the band. I'd photographed them the year before at the Manchester Free Trade Hall and apparently Morrissey was impressed with the photos, so I was asked to do the band shot for *The Queen Is Dead*. I barely slept the night

before the shoot because I was so excited about meeting them. So the next day, I brought along a friend for moral support, and we met the band in the morning at Piccadilly Station, as they were coming up from London. When we got there, the press officer goes, 'So where's your car?' I told him I didn't have one, so we had to be driven around in a cab. At the time I was sharing a house with friends in Longsight and my dark room was my bedroom. My processing chemicals were kept in old lemonade bottles! The shoot probably should've gone to a big-name photographer like Anton Corbijn, but it went to me, a fan using a £150 Nikon camera with the wrong lens.

"So we go to Salford Lads Club first – apparently, and I don't know if it's true, Morrissey mistakenly thought his hero Albert Finney went there as a child – and I remember it was the darkest, darkest wintery day and we were all shivering with the cold, which was a real obstacle. We spent about half an hour there, then we went – and failed – to take pictures at Victoria station, before going to the Arndale Centre where we kind of gave up because it was just so dark and horrid. But I did manage to get the image which Morrissey chose for the inner sleeve of the album. He has this sort of Mona Lisa smirk



(Above) The inner sleeve of *The Smiths'* 1986 LP *The Queen Is Dead*; (right) Stephen Wright's favourite frame from the shoot, with (from left) Andy Rourke (and rabbit!), Morrissey, Johnny Marr and Mike Joyce.

and looks all-knowing – he's very much in command. If you look at the body language, you can tell he was king of the pack. I think the cheap equipment, and the fact there was so little light, gave it a grittiness, like a 1950s picture. It's a combination of Salfordian folklore and the greatest band of the '80s. Morrissey later sent me a card saying: 'A sweeter set of photos were never taken.'

"Though legend has it that Johnny Marr didn't like the picture because it was presented to him as a fait accompli: 'Morrissey has decided...' In fact, Morrissey, along with art co-ordinator Jo Slee, designed the front cover with the Alain Delon image and chose all the graphics, fonts and artwork. He was most specific about what he wanted, even down to very elaborate colour swatches – what went with what. Morrissey is a very, very clever man. That said, I actually prefer another frame [pictured right] where you can see more of Johnny and Morrissey in a sort

of half-profile and his quiff looks better.

"What in the photograph amuses a lot of people is how big Andy Rourke's groin looks – you have to wonder how he walked! I actually remember going to Johnny's house the following year and I noticed on his fridge was stuck a print of it and somebody had written the caption: 'What's this stuffed down your trousers – a rabbit?!' Yet The Smiths had this image of being miserable, but if you saw them live it was always fun and such a celebratory experience. It was like performance theatre with Morrissey. He could create real drama and that's why there was so much adoration and joy for the band. Seeing them live back then was always like a rugby scrum with X-hundred people. For me, they were the best band in the world since the early Stones.

"So it was kind of an honour to get the job and this picture sort of follows me around – it's always in the background. I go back to Manchester quite a lot and always visit the Salford Lads Club. It's still this incredibly traditional place, built in 1903, and they've received funding to rebuild the gym and the main hall has been redone for concerts now. They made me the sole honorary member of the club, just because of this photograph, which is amazing and gives me a very warm feeling. Some newspaper said it was 'the Abbey Road photo for the '80s generation.' I don't know about that. I always say it's the band, not the picture, that is classic."

■ You can see more of Stephen Wright's work with *The Smiths* at www.smithsphotos.com

"A NEWSPAPER SAID IT WAS 'THE ABBEY ROAD PHOTO FOR THE '80S GENERATION.' I SAY IT'S THE BAND, NOT THE PICTURE, THAT IS CLASSIC." **STEPHEN WRIGHT**



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BEHATTED TROUBADOUR **James Bay** FIELDS YOUR TRICKY QUESTIONS ON CEREAL, STAR WARS AND UNDER-APPRECIATED SPORTS...

WORDS PAUL STOKES PHOTOGRAPHS ADAM LAWRENCE

Though he couldn't fly or smash through walls, Iron Man's Tony Stark was still an impressive character without his special suit. Batman was a debonair millionaire when not dressed up as a winged mammal. Cape and leotard packed away, Clark Kent was probably a decent journalist when not Superman – just imagine how quickly he could type. Backstage at Milan's Alcatraz concert hall, Q is having an audience with one of modern pop's heroes, without their "costume".

As he cheerily greets us with his long hair flowing free, we are shocked to see Hitchin singer-songwriter James Bay is not wearing his trademark black fedora.

So ever-present has Bay's tither become that bootleg black hats – dodgy trilbies rather than Bay's preferred wide-brim style – are being hawked outside the venue. In fact, during the Brit Awards earlier this year social media speculation about his headwear threatened to overshadow the fact that he'd won Best British Male Solo Artist and duetted with Justin Bieber. What was he hiding under there? Was he going bald?



(Above) Bay with Justin "Ping Pong" Bieber at the Brits, February, 2016; (below) Sultana Bran, the king of cereals!

"I've got nothing to hide," says the singer with a laugh as he considers the world's obsession with his hat. "I am categorically not going bald."

Having honed his craft through his teenage years busking and playing at open-mic nights, the 25-year-old's debut album, *Chaos And The Calm*, lived up to his 2015 Brit Awards Critics' Choice nod, blending vintage rock'n'roll licks and 21st-century pop hooks with some serious heartstring plucking, going on to become 2015's best-selling album in the UK.

"I like the idea that someone might be telling an artist to get a hat because it 'worked' for me," laughs Bay. Given Bay's huge popularity, the Q readers' questions won't just be about his hat though, surely...

Apparently, you have a cereal fixation. What's your favourite cereal? [East London cereal restaurant] The Cereal Killer Café – a good idea or a twat's paradise? Jane Kelly, via Q Mail

The Cereal Killer Café is a bad idea. It's over-priced, simple as that. Just buy it from the supermarket. I do love cereal, it's the perfect way to start the day – this sounds like a wholesome advert – and it's the perfect way to end the day if you're that way inclined. And I am. I will take it in all its forms. Except for too mushy. I prefer a crispiness to my cereal unless it's Weetabix. Whole milk, blue top is the preferred choice. If I have to pick just one, then it's Sultana Bran, boring answer but true.

You performed with Justin Bieber at the Brits this year? Can you tell us any stories about him? Chris Kearney, Guildford

He's very good at table tennis, he beat me. I was in the lead until about 15 points, then he beat me 21-16. It was in his dressing room, and between the silent atmosphere and his golden hair, I couldn't handle it [laughs].

How many different styles of hats did you try out before settling on a fedora? Will there be different headwear for album two? Maria Walsh, Ashford

Maybe... Actually, "probably not" is the more realistic answer. There weren't any other styles, the wider-brimmed fedora thing is what I was into and when I tried one on, that was it. I can >>





**"A FAN ASKED IF
I'D GO TO THE PROM
WITH THEM TO
DANCE TO MY OWN
SONG. I SAID NO."**

**Cat's got the cream:
James Bay, Milan,
14 March, 2016.**

understand people's fixation with the hat to an extent because I wear it every time I perform. Would there be an audible sigh if I went onstage without it? I hope so *[laughs]*. Eventually I'm going to perform without it. I'm not going to do it forever. That would be a bit boring.

As a person interested in holding back rivers, what's your favourite dam?

Caroline Edwards, via Q Mail

The Hoover Dam, which is probably the only dam I can name, off the top of my head. And it's in Superman. I've never been asked a dam question before. That cherry has been popped.

Are you in favour of referees using TV replays in football?

Adam Nelson, via Q Mail

It takes away the initiative a referee should have. I think there's more romance in the beautiful game when you're watching it on TV, going, "Look at that!" but the decision has been made and can't be changed. I love the foam for the free kicks, but I'm against TV replays. I want a referee to be certain of their decision. If he gets it wrong he's an idiot. That's how we feel about refs most of the time anyway *[laughs]*.

If I were to visit Hitchin, where would you recommend I go?

James Perch, Nottingham

The Victoria pub just down from the station is a great pub, one of the last ones in Hitchin. So go there and there's a lovely shop in the churchyard called Fly 9, it sells loads of cool little trinkets. For gigs, I'd go to Club 85 and see what's happening. It's the only proper venue in town. Lethal Bizzle has played there.

Do you have a hidden talent? If yes, can you show us?

@JayCharice, via Twitter

In my history as a pool player I have chipped the white ball over a colour when I've been snookered and potted the ball I wanted three times. I'm really proud of that. A lot of people say you can't chip the ball in pool, but I don't care. I'm a renegade! How many times have I tried? About 17.

What's the most romantic/cringeworthy thing a fan has told you they've done to you music?

Ross Graham, Leicester

Those are two very different things.



"Oh good, another question about hats!": meltdown in Milan; (left) free kick spray – a rare Bay-favoured footie innovation.



Romantically, someone got down on one knee in the crowd at the Isle Of Wight Festival during If You Ever Want To Be In Love and proposed to his girlfriend and she said yes! Cringeworthy? Someone got down on both knees... joking! There was a fan who asked if I'd go to the prom with them to dance to my own song. I didn't do that.

There are so many singer-songwriters right now, did you not want to be in a band or did you just want to see your name in lights?

Paul Curtis, St Helier, Jersey

Of course, there's a part of me that wanted to see my name in lights, but I grew up playing in bands. I was never a solo artist except just before things started kicking off for me. I was always



"I'D LIKE TO WRITE A SONG ABOUT SHOT PUT, I DON'T THINK ANYONE ELSE HAS."

a guitarist and maybe co-songwriter before. Maybe one day I'll mix it up and start some sort of freaky little band outfit.

Your song Running has been picked up by Sport Relief this year, are you planning to write about any other physical activities?

Martha Warre, Cork

I was going to do an even slower one called Jogging. Also, there should be a song about hurling because that's a really under-appreciated sport, and it could also be about puking [laughs]. I'd like to write a song about shot put, I don't think anyone else has.

Are you for or against the sugar tax?

Emma Voors, Cardiff

Yeah, I'm into it! We can have less sugar and still enjoy cereal. You know what? Weetabix without sugar is as good as Weetabix with sugar. I know that will split opinion. You might lose a few subscribers if you run that!

Ronnie Wood played live with you last year. Did he give you any advice?

Paul Merrick, via Q Mail

Not as such, but the best advice he gave me was turning up onstage and smashing it out of the park. Ronnie knew exactly how to get up there and flaunt it. So, it was physical advice. He did tell me a brilliant story. We were in the dressing room at Brixton and

he went: "Last time I was in this room, it was after the Stones played here. George Harrison walked in with his guitar and I said, 'George, play us a song', so he sat in the corner and silenced the room." Imagine being in that room!

I saw you recently refer to your favourite Star Wars character as "Hans Solo" [sic]. You haven't actually seen any of the films, have you?

David Laud, Beccles

Did I bugger it up? It's my shit thumbs on my phone. Er, I was just doing a Scandinavian version. I have seen them all! I do love Star Wars.

As someone who was largely self-taught, do you think BRIT School graduates have an unfair advantage?

Jamie Vesty, Manchester

I don't think it's unfair. Sure, Adele and Amy Winehouse went but they are great and there are people who went that we know nothing about. I don't think colleges are the greatest places in the world as they can risk giving false hope to more people than they should. The great stuff will rise to the top whatever. I went to a music college

For chuck's sake: (above, from left) shot putting, subject of Bay's next hit (possibly); Superman – he quite literally held back the river; with the, erm, physically inspirational Ronnie Wood, 2015; (below) Han Solo or Hans Solo, in Bay's Nordic version.

and I thought getting there was the greatest thing but I gradually lost interest as I didn't feel it was getting me any closer to what I do now.

Serious question: I own 10 hats, how many do you own?

@fishieandco, via Twitter

Two. I have a woolly hat, does that count? Three. Are the hats insured? I don't think so. I have got a hatbox now because squishing them into the overhead luggage compartment of an aeroplane doesn't bode well. I needed protection, although I can always buy more hats.

Have you written any songs for your second album yet?

Matt King, Sudbury

Yes. They sound good. I'm not sure if all the ones I've finished are for the second album. I'm of the belief that if I have a song that sounds great it might not be for the second album, it could be for three albums' time. I've written some that I really like but I need to write a load more and see what they sound like, then decide.

There's no schedule yet, but I'll spend the beginning of next year writing and recording and hopefully do a new LP next year. 📀

To take part in next month's Cash For Questions feature, go to Qthemusic.com, follow @Qmagazine on Twitter or visit Facebook ([facebook.com/qmagazine](https://www.facebook.com/qmagazine)). £25 for each question printed! If your question gets printed, please email to claim your money.



BE FRONT OF THE Q

Meet **Sky Q** – Sky's next-generation home entertainment platform, which completely reinvents the viewing experience...

On the move: Sky Q gives you access to your TV favourites, including your recordings, anywhere, any time.



Just over 10 years ago, Sky+ signalled a sea change in the art of watching television. No longer would your favourite shows and films have total control over you: with the ability to pause and record, you could have control over them too. Since then, Sky has continued to break the mould with the launch of HD and 3D, On Demand and Sky Go. Now it

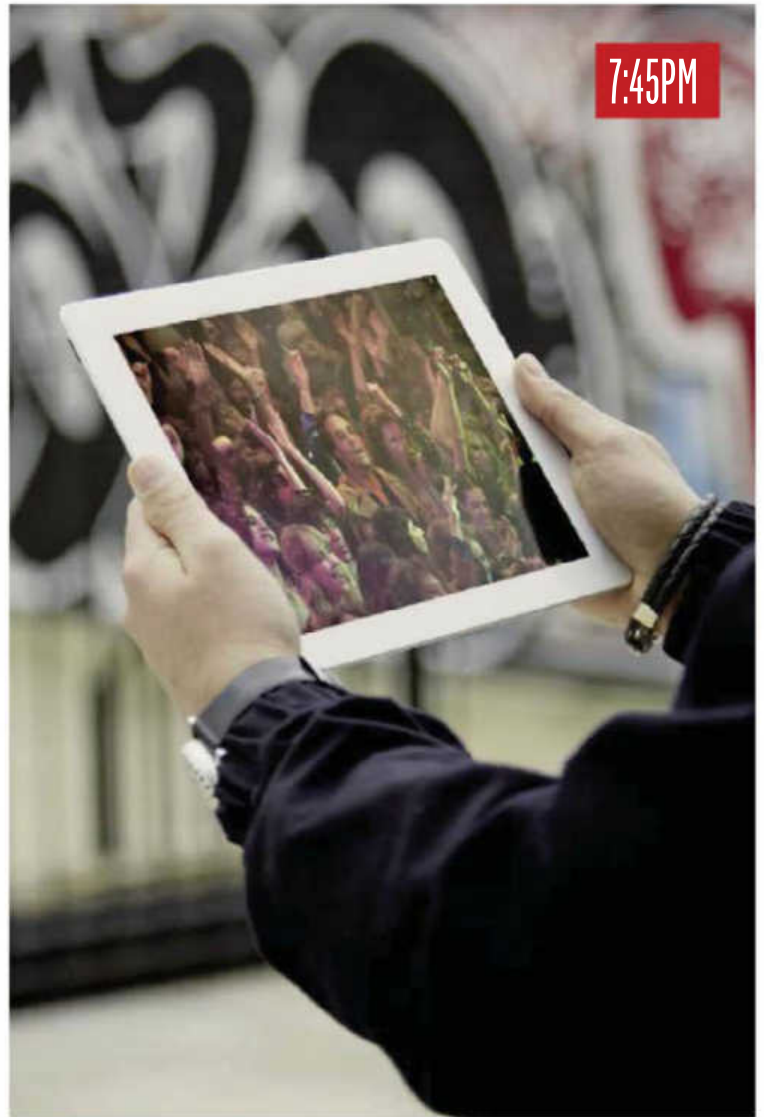
takes another brilliant, bold leap forward with the unveiling of Sky Q.

Sky Q completely reinvents the viewing experience. Modern life doesn't revolve around the same TV in the same room and Sky have launched a home entertainment system that tailors to that. Sky Q's technology means that everything is delivered faster and better, and it's fully connected wirelessly so you can watch all of your TV – whether it's live, recorded or on demand – anywhere in your home. At the centre of it all is Sky's cutting-edge Fluid Viewing™, which gives you the option to pause the action in one room and carry on in another, as well as being able to take your recordings with you wherever you go. On TV and tablet, you can access all of your Sky TV.

Once again, Sky is handing more control to its customers. Sky Q also gives you an unparalleled broadband experience with WiFi hotspots wherever you have your Sky Q kit throughout your home, meaning you'll have a fast and reliable connection in every room in the house.

Sky Q's dazzling user interface gives you access to a whole new world of TV, with the state-of-the-art remote control reminding you that you are at the forefront of a new generation of TV viewer. Over the next few months, you'll be able to watch groundbreaking TV in the room of your choice, or on the move. Sky Arts will show the story of American rhythm-and-blues icon Mavis Staples in the documentary *Mavis!*. Featuring rare footage and conversations with groundbreaking artists such as Bob Dylan, Prince and Chuck D, *Mavis!* tells the story of the voice that soundtracked the civil rights movement. *Sex, Drugs And Rock'n'Roll*, meanwhile, will shine a light on key moments that have shaped musical history. And on Sky Atlantic, ingenious political comedy *Veep* will return for its fifth season, while *Game Of Thrones* will provide one of the TV events of the year when its sixth season begins at the end of April.

“SKY Q’S DAZZLING USER INTERFACE GIVES YOU ACCESS TO A WHOLE NEW WORLD OF TV.”



SKY Q – A WHOLE NEW WAY OF LISTENING TO MUSIC, TOO...

As well as pioneering a new way of watching TV, Sky Q also lets you stream music wirelessly using Bluetooth or Apple’s AirPlay, putting the biggest music collection you’ve ever had at your fingertips. With YouTube and Vevo both accessible through Sky Q, you can also watch the best new music videos first.



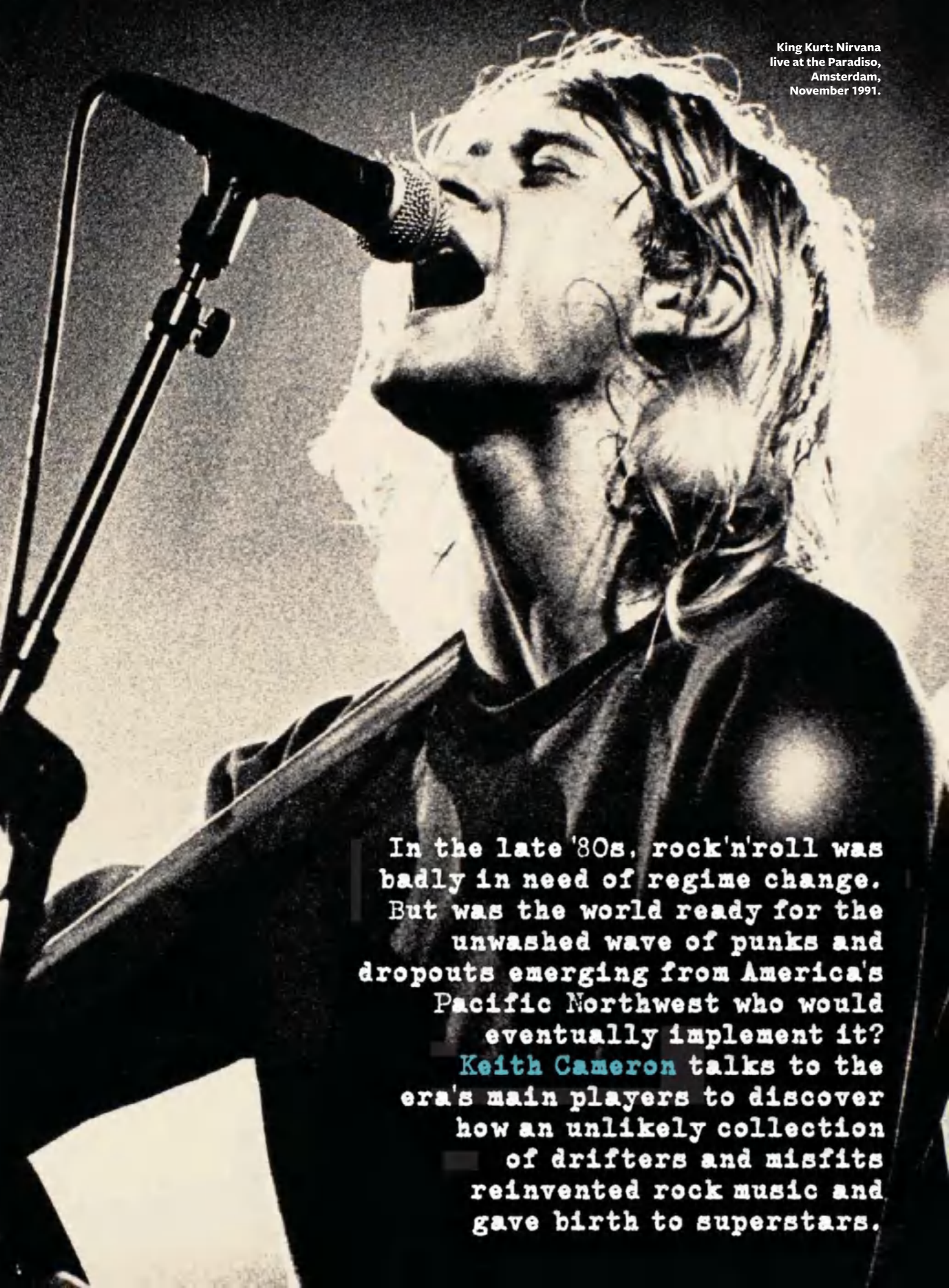
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THE BIRTH
OF GRUNGE

Here We Are Now, Entertain Us!





King Kurt: Nirvana
live at the Paradiso,
Amsterdam,
November 1991.

In the late '80s, rock'n'roll was badly in need of regime change. But was the world ready for the unwashed wave of punks and dropouts emerging from America's Pacific Northwest who would eventually implement it? Keith Cameron talks to the era's main players to discover how an unlikely collection of drifters and misfits reinvented rock music and gave birth to superstars.

On 24 April, 1988, Nirvana exited the

stage at an erstwhile gay biker bar in downtown Seattle

called the Vogue. The trio came from Aberdeen, a small, rather browbeaten industrial town over 100 miles away on the remote Pacific Northwest coast, and they had just completed their first proper gig in the big city. It was not exactly a harbinger of impending rock'n'roll regime change.

Nirvana felt intimidated by the fact that the tiny audience mostly comprised other musicians, plus Bruce Pavitt and Jonathan Poneman, the founders of Sub Pop, a newly established Seattle independent record label debating whether to release a single by the band. It was a small, incestuous scene, where expectations of success were low. Although Washington state's metropolis, Seattle lacked the infrastructural muscle and bravado of established rock centres such as New York or San Francisco. A happening gig might equate to 30 people rocking out in a bar, or even just a house party fuelled by kegs of beer and MDA, the ecstasy-related psychoactive drug then-prevalent in the city.

Among the assembled few who had shown up early that Sunday night was Mark Arm, formerly the singer of celebrated local band Green River, whose new venture Mudhoney had played their first gig only five days earlier at this same venue. He might have had a day-job recycling cassette cartridges for elevator music company Muzak, but like most of his peers, Arm ridiculed the notion of making a career in music. He knew of Nirvana through the local grapevine: the looming 6'8" figure of bassist Krist Novoselic was familiar from mid-'80s punk gigs around Seattle that he would attend with Buzz Osborne, leader of another Aberdeen band, the Melvins, and Matt Lukin, the Melvins' ex-bassist, who was now in Mudhoney. Meanwhile Dale Crover, the Melvins' drummer, played on the Nirvana demo tape which had alerted Sub Pop to the trio's potential.

But as the band began their set at the Vogue, the particular facet of Nirvana which had so impressed Jonathan Poneman upon hearing their demo – singer Kurt Cobain's *infernal scream* – was rendered mute. In their nervous state, the band had simply walked onstage at the appointed time and begun playing, heedless of the fact that the PA wasn't switched on and the sound engineer wasn't even in the building.

The Sub Pop contingent exchanged bewildered looks. Bruce Pavitt

It was a small, incestuous scene, where expectations of success were low...

(Left) Sub Pop "supergroup" Green River (vocalist Mark Arm, centre); (right) Green River live at Ditto Tavern, Seattle, 1986.



thought them "fairly weak. They didn't have strong songs." Photographer Charles Peterson, whose impressionistic black-and-white images of Sub Pop bands in ecstatic onstage communion would come to define the new rock revolution, saw no reason to remove the lens cap from his camera. In Mark Arm's estimation, "Anyone who says, 'I saw that show and I knew there were great things to come' is lying through their teeth."



Exactly three years later, Nirvana were freshly signed to David Geffen's record label and ensconced in a Burbank rehearsal studio with producer Butch Vig, making last-minute preparations for the recording of their second album, which began the following week at Sound City in Los Angeles. As is now the stuff of history books and doctoral theses, Nevermind changed the face of rock music. Thanks to a kinetic mass response to the songs of Kurt Cobain, as rendered by a band operating at the

THE BIRTH OF GRUNGE



Mudhoney's Mark Arm: "We never planned that much ahead."



defining characteristics.
We had a point of view – underground music with no fancy trappings – and enough skill to make that happen. Whereas in Green River the whole time we were looking for something. We kinda know in Mudhoney what we do, but we're still pushing around the edges a bit. But we never planned ahead that much. As long as we were able to do it and it was fun, we thought we should just keep doing it. The key was finding a good balance between caring about what you do and not giving a fuck!

GrUnge
WITNESS

Mark Arm

Then: Green River, Mudhoney Now: Mudhoney

“At the outset with Mudhoney I wanted to do what I was frustrated at not being able to do in Green River. But there wasn't really any agenda that I can remember. In a sense, it might have been a continuation of later-period Mr Epp, the band I was in before Green River. Because I'd played guitar in Mr Epp. When Green River started, none of my guitar equipment really worked, so I just became the singer and had no input into the writing of the music. Once Mudhoney started, I reacquainted myself with the guitar and started writing songs.

“Green River broke up because we were pulling in different directions. There

was some stuff we did that I thought was really great, and some stuff I thought was not so great. You're one-fifth of a group of people, you can't just... well, I guess you can always say, 'I quit' and walk away. Steve [Turner] quit. We were all punk rock kids and Stone [Gossard] was more of a metal kid, but Steve quitting actually had an impact for the better. We got Bruce Fairweather in the band and got more into a straight-up rock thing and less of a metal thing. So ironically, Steve quitting made Green River a band he would have been happier in!

“The main thing I took from Green River into Mudhoney was that we could do it. The fact that Green River put out

three 12-inches and a 7-inch was impressive to me. Soundgarden, who had started around the same time, didn't get a record out for a number of years. There were some Seattle bands that never put out records at the time – some really great ones, like Feast. So Mudhoney's aspiration was to put out a single. I was working with Bruce [Pavitt] at Muzak and brought in a cassette recorded on a boom box at a practice and played it for him. It was just noise. He was like, 'I can't tell what's going on, why don't you go in with [Seattle producer] Jack Endino and we'll pay for it...' I mean, who has that?! That's a really lucky position to be in.

“It's fair to say luck has been one of Mudhoney's

THE BIRTH
OF GRUNGE

GrUnge
WITNESS

Buzz Osborne

Then: Melvins Now: Melvins

Nirvana (from left, Kurt Cobain, Krist Novoselic, Chad Channing), Bainbridge Island, Washington, May 1988; (below left) Melvins in 1987. Bassist Matt Lukin (left) would later co-found Mudhoney.

Kodachrome
SLIDE



Buzz Osborne: "I'm not Kurt Cobain but I'm also not dead."

" At the beginning, the Melvins' ambition was to play a show, maybe. To play on a stage. Not even to make a record. We always laugh that we surpassed our initial expectations *long* ago, so the key is not to have any expectations. You can't be disappointed!

"We're Captain Beefheart doing heavy metal. That's a good description. I think very highly of what we do - I always did. I just never expected anything. I never *thought* our music would influence a generation of musicians that will influence music for decades and be felt on every corner of the globe - I mean, that certainly is what happened, but I never thought that would happen. I always assumed I had good taste. But other people, some highly influential people, thought the same thing. So be it!

"The first record we were ever on was the Deep Six compilation. Deep Six was met with a massive whimpering response from the world. I don't think anybody gave a shit. I didn't feel a hell of a lot of support from people at that point. I liked the Mudhoney guys that were in Green River, we did some shows with those guys and some shows with Soundgarden, but other than that I remember big arguments at the release party about who was going to

headline and who was going to open. Guess where we played?! We weren't headlining and we weren't playing in the middle of the bill either. I always thought that was funny. Even then, there wasn't a lot of solidarity between the bands. It's difficult to talk about that period, especially if you want to talk about the truth, because people view you as being bitter. Which I'm not - I'm a happy motherfucker! I feel like everything that's good in my life I've gotten as a result of music. Every single thing. I wouldn't have any of this without it.

"The last time I had a job was in 1988. That doesn't mean that I've always had money, but that was the last time somebody was underwriting anything I was

doing. Since then I've made my living as a musician. But I work and I've been very careful. And without going into too many graphic details, I do fine. I want for very little. I'm not driving a Bentley, but I'm also not driving a jalopy. I mean, I'm not Kurt Cobain, but also I'm not dead. So you decide who wins. It's a cold way of looking at it, but one has to have a sense of humour about these things.

"The Melvins have been playing for 33 years. It's what I do, I like it. There's no end in sight. We're playing right now with Steve MacDonald from Redd Kross; we just played our first show with him on Saturday night, in Vegas, and that went really well. I'll make music until I can't do it any more, or until nobody gives a shit.

"The Melvins have been playing for 33 years. It's what I do. There's no end in sight." Buzz Osborne

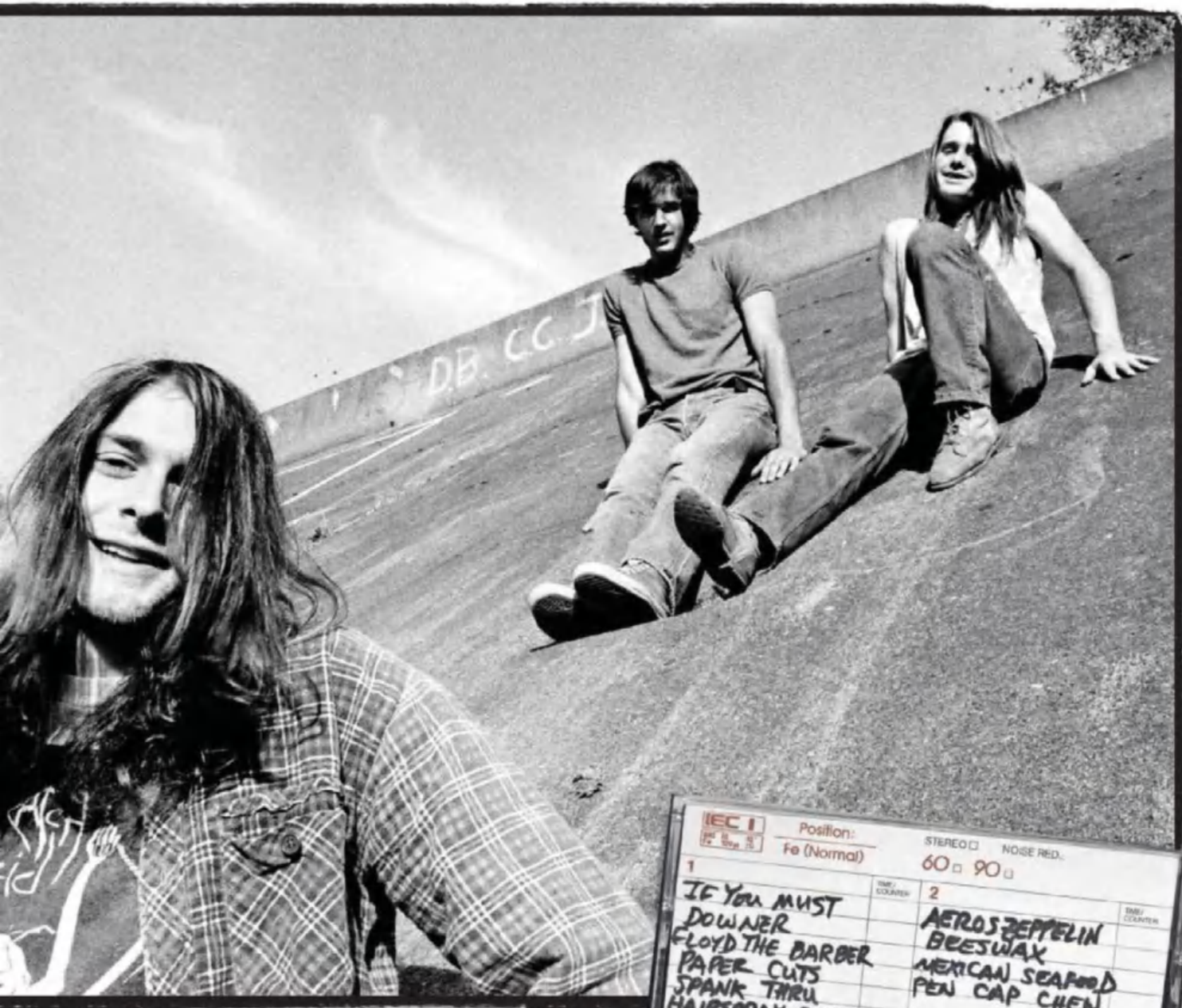


MATT LUKIN - Bass

BUZZ OSBORNE - Guitar, Vocals

DALE - Drums

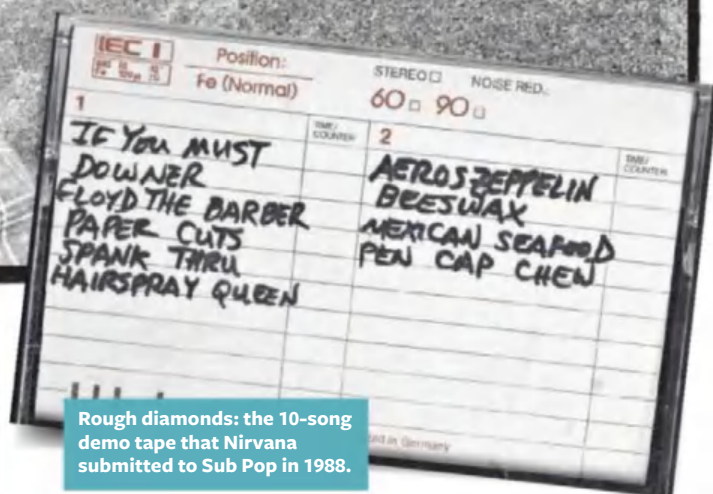
The Melvins use guitars and drums cuz they want the best.



peak of its powers, Nirvana delivered “grunge” to the world. In the months following the September 1991 release of *Nevermind*, as the music industry scrambled to get a grip on the phenomenon it had unleashed, Nirvana became the most popular band on the planet. Musicians to whom Cobain had once looked up to as elders and betters now rode his band’s slipstream: Mudhoney, Soundgarden and, most spectacularly, Pearl Jam would all owe their varying levels of commercial success to the transformative influence of *Nevermind*.

Undoubtedly, Kurt Cobain’s unique qualities as a songwriter imbued Nirvana with a different artistic complexion from any of their contemporaries. But as that chastening experience at the *Vogue* proved, Nirvana and Cobain did not present themselves to the world fully-formed. Nor did they emerge from a vacuum. Rather, this was the ultimate example of a fertile local scene realising its full potential. “The most fascinating thing about Nirvana to me was the exponential artistic growth,” says Bruce Pavitt. “Early on, the whole band rested basically on the quality of Kurt Cobain’s voice at the time. They didn’t have good material, they went through a couple of not-so-good drummers. To see every six months the quantum leaps they would make in the quality of performance, songwriting, was just the most amazing thing I’ve ever experienced.”

CHARLES PETERSON/EMP MUSEUM



Rough diamonds: the 10-song demo tape that Nirvana submitted to Sub Pop in 1988.

That process was influenced by peers, forebears and friends, and driven by imitation, ambition and rivalry. Cobain constantly bridled at what he saw as Sub Pop’s manoeuvring: “We feel like we’re not accomplishing anything by playing the Seattle club circuit,” he wrote in a letter (unsent) to Screaming Trees singer and a friend of Cobain’s, Mark Lanegan. “Sub Pop is having financial problems and the promise of an EP & LP within the year was just a bullshit excuse... to keep us from scouting other labels.” In September 1990, the day after Nirvana played their biggest Seattle gig thus far, at the hysterically packed Motorsports Garage, headlining over their one-time mentors the Melvins, Cobain looked this writer in the eye and said: “We figured we may as well get on the radio and try and make a little bit of money... All my life my dream has been to be a big rock star.” He was laughing – of course he was: pre-*Nevermind*, it seemed a laughable thing to say – but the calibre of his new songs suggested he was serious.

The moment at which his journey began is debatable, but it certainly pre-dates the day in January 1988 when Cobain, Krist



THE BIRTH OF GRUNGE

Novoselic and Dale Crover recorded the 10-song demo, which Jack Endino then handed to Jonathan Poneman with the words: "I really don't know what to make of this." You could trace its roots back to when Cobain was a teenager, certainly to the day in summer 1983 when he saw the Melvins' debut public performance, a free gig in the car-park of the Thriftway supermarket where Buzz Osborne worked. "This was what I was looking for," he wrote in his journal, equating the experience of witnessing the Melvins' pulverising meld of hardcore punk and metal dirge with a religious conversion. "I found my special purpose."

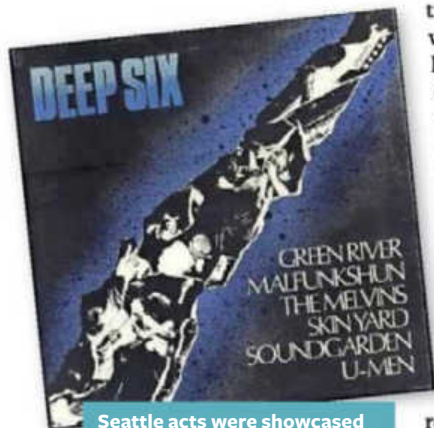
Or perhaps it was when Cobain accompanied the slightly older Osborne, Lukin and Novoselic on their weekend trips from Aberdeen to Seattle, where Friday and Saturday nights were often spent at the Metropolis club, a rare Seattle venue that permitted under-21s. Mark Arm and Steve Turner played here as members of Mr Epp And The Calculations, whose satirical cacophony was best described by Arm himself in a letter to the fanzine *Desperate Times*: "I hate Mr Epp! Pure grunge! Pure noise! Pure shit!" It was at the Metropolis that Jeff Ament's hardcore trio *Deranged Diction* supported Hüsker Dü, who paid them 25 dollars and two joints. In 1984, Ament would join Arm and Turner, plus Stone Gossard and Alex Shumway, to form Green River.

If Arm's mocking self-critique in *Desperate Times* was the first published use of the word "grunge" in relation to a Seattle band, then Green River were arguably the original exponent of the form as it came to be understood: a fusion of punk and heavy metal, with none of the former's self-conscious piety or the latter's self-indulgent virtuosity. The polarity was a reflection of the group members' varied sensibilities: Shumway and Turner were skateboarding punk snots who had played together briefly in Spluii Numa; their senior high school friend Gossard was, according to Turner, "a smart-ass heavy metal dude, with whom he'd played in a band called the Ducky Boys which never graduated beyond jamming in the Gossard family basement. Arm and Ament, meanwhile, had found common ground in hardcore and the classic rock staples of their youth. One night at the Metropolis, Arm was impressed by Ament's DJ set, segueing Black Flag into Aerosmith. "That was the beginning of him and I being friends," says Ament. "Shortly after that he asked me to be in the new supergroup. Green River really did seem like a supergroup at the time."

That a group featuring ex-members of Mr Epp & The Calculations, Spluii Numa and the Ducky Boys could be considered "super" reflects the diminished prospects for Seattle rock bands dabbling in

transgressive modes – which, with their ominous wailing hybrid of punk and metal, Green River most definitely were. Their conflicting elements would eventually tear the band apart, but not before they had instigated the first recorded proof of the ominous stirring in Seattle's underground. Studio owner and engineer Chris Hanzsek had recorded the initial Green River demos and wanted to release a single on his new record label C/Z. After seeing

"Chris Cornell just had it, that charisma you can't teach. And he was a fantastic singer."
Matt Cameron



Seattle acts were showcased on 1986's *Deep Six* album.

Soundgarden support Green River, he proposed a split release. At which point, Mark Arm got on the phone to his former University of Washington philosophy classmate, Kim Thayil, who was Soundgarden's guitarist. Between them, Arm and Thayil boosted the initial idea into a showcase of local bands: they would add the feral bludgeon of the Melvins, the shamanic glam-rock Malfunkshun, the art-prog Skin Yard and garage rock crazies the U-Men, and call the album *Deep Six*.

Released in spring 1986 to little fanfare, what differentiated *Deep Six* from previous Seattle compilations was its conceptual ambition and purity: all the bands shared a common denominator of

GrUnge
WiTNeSS

Matt Cameron

Then: Soundgarden

Now: Soundgarden and Pearl Jam

“ I moved to Seattle from San Diego in 1983, to reconnect with a musician I had played with, Glenn Slater. He had a progressive rock band in Seattle – I loved Weather Report, Mahavishnu [Orchestra] and Tony Williams’s Lifetime, things like that. So I packed my drums. I was ready for an adventure.

“There were lots of cool clubs. At the Metropolis I met Hiro Yamamoto. Hiro and Kim Thayil played in a covers band called The Shemps. I was in a band called feeDBack, who opened for The Shemps at the Morningtown Pizza in 1984 and that’s when I saw Hiro again. The Shemps had this 17-year-old singer I was impressed by – and that was a young Chris Cornell.

“I joined Soundgarden in 1986. They were my favourite Seattle band. Chris just had it, that charisma you can’t teach, and he was a fantastic singer. After my first practice, he

came up to me – and he didn’t talk too much then – and said, ‘Hey, man, you played that stuff perfectly.’ So I was in. I was getting into the idea of being a songwriter, but I wasn’t up to their level yet. It was good to be around guys who were naturally gifted.

“With Screaming Life, I was surprised at how good we sounded in a recording environment. We were essentially a local bar band, but we had something special. Jack Endino nailed it. A lot of the early Sub Pop records he produced at Reciprocal still sound great. Because we had a lot of limitations, we got to the essence of what made the music good, which was performance.

“Once Sub Pop formed, we had a regional music scene going on. We were able to spread the word internationally, with John Peel embracing us early on. We felt excited and proud. But Sub Pop were horrible at paying their bands. It was not a well-



Matt Cameron: “I was ready for an adventure...”

run organisation, so I was glad to be off that label. By the time of Nevermind, all these bands had been on the road for years – there was a very big underground rock movement. It just felt like our time to shine. By the time we made Superunknown [1994] we were at a creative peak.

“Toward the end of our career we were imploding out on the road. Chris’s drinking was through the roof, so if Chris wasn’t good the rest of us felt that. He wouldn’t communicate to us. It was just the progression of his life at that point. When I went into Pearl Jam it was a lot more relaxed. They communicated better than Soundgarden ever had. But since Soundgarden got back together in 2010, we’re very different people now. It feels like our family is back together, which is great. I bring the stability factor to both bands. I’m very proud of that as well. **”**

Soundgarden’s Chris Cornell in full flow, Vogue Tavern, Seattle, 1987; (below) Soundgarden’s Sub Pop line-up, 1987 (from left, Kim Thayil, Hiro Yamamoto, Cornell, Matt Cameron).



Mother Love Bone were an unambiguous grasp for arena rock grandiloquence that got lost in the industry machine.



otherworldly heaviness. “Deep Six defined Seattle’s underground music identity,” says Thayil. “We took a punk ethos and bound it with the metal roots that all of us had from the ’70s to make this weird refugee heavy metal. Deep Six acknowledged that, ‘Hey, there’s a cool sound here and a lot of cool bands here.’”

When Bruce Pavitt got a copy of Deep Six, the penny dropped. Since arriving in the Pacific Northwest in 1979 to build his own degree in punk rock at the Washington state capital Olympia’s über-liberal Evergreen College (its Latin motto: “Omnia lateres”, or “Let it all hang out”), he had become fascinated by the regional post-punk

scenes across the US that thrived despite being ignored by mainstream media. He instigated his own fanzine to document the phenomenon: Subterranean Pop. Shortened to Sub Pop, Pavitt’s ’zine culminated in the summer 1986 release of Sub Pop 100, a 13-track album featuring bands from across the US (plus one each from Japan and Mexico). But by the time his record – the first on the Sub Pop label – appeared, Pavitt had realised that the most exciting scene in the whole country was the one happening in the city where he lived. “Deep Six inspired me to do what Motown did: focus on the music that’s coming out of your own back yard and blowing that up.”

Pavitt was desperate to release a Green River record. The only snag



Bruce Pavitt

Then: Co-founder, Sub Pop Records
Now: Creative Director, 8Stem

“In 1987, I felt Seattle would rival early-’70s Detroit: the bands here might not be huge pop stars but could impact culture in the same way MC5 and The Stooges did. That was my anticipation. You could sense something was happening.

“Green River were doing

the slow, heavy, sludgy, Stooges-like rock that nobody else was doing at the time. Their sound progressively got cleaned up as the records moved on, hence the split between the Mudhoney and Pearl Jam factions. But their first record, Come On Down, the one that Steve Turner was on, started it all.

“You had on the one hand, in the pop world, glam metal from LA, and then in the underground there was a really limiting Maximum Rock’n’Roll punk scene that rejected classic rock and hard rock. In Seattle, a lot of bands went: ‘I like Black Flag, but I like Black Sabbath too.’”

“Jon [Poneman] and I had just quit our day jobs to open up our office and the new Green River album Rehab Doll was going to be our big release. The band handed us the master tapes and said, ‘Good luck, we’ve broken up.’ It was almost the death blow



Mother Love Bone (Andrew Wood, centre, who died in 1990), Paramount Theatre, Seattle, 1989; (above right) Pearl Jam, 1991 (from left, Eddie Vedder, Jeff Ament, Stone Gossard, Dave Abbruzzese, Mike McCready); (right) the Subterranean Pop fanzine.



THE BIRTH OF GRUNGE

was, he didn't have any money. Budding gig promoter and journalist Jonathan Poneman did, but he was an advocate of Soundgarden, about whom Pavitt, despite being friends with Kim Thayil since the age of 11, was less vehement. Both men, however, could agree that Seattle was, as Poneman described in a December 1986 article, "in a musical state where there is an acknowledgment of a certain consciousness... Something is gonna happen." To make it happen, they joined forces, and in 1987 released EPs by both Green River and Soundgarden. The latter band were built around an oppositional equation not dissimilar to Green River: anchored by indomitable drummer Matt Cameron, the sensuous textural guitar-riffing of Thayil offered a subversive

counterpoint to the smouldering moans and lustful screams of the invariably shirtless Chris Cornell. Soundgarden were the Deep Six band most-likely-to; like Robert Plant fronting the Butthole Surfers, or the Melvins with a dreamboat singer. Kurt Cobain was most definitely an admirer. "When I first met Kurt he was really, really into Screaming Life by Soundgarden," noted Poneman. "Later he disavowed it, he said it was macho breast-beating or whatever, but I think one of the reasons he wanted to work with Sub Pop was because we put out Screaming Life. It wasn't because of Green River."

Poneman knew full well that in conceptual terms Green River and Soundgarden were pretty close. Unlike Soundgarden, Green River couldn't reconcile their factional tendencies. Steve Turner had already left in 1985, and when Ament and Gossard suggested to Mark Arm that he might further the band's commercial appeal by taking vocal lessons, the die was cast. On Halloween 1987, Ament and Gossard, plus Turner's replacement Bruce Fairweather, announced Green River was finished. They duly formed Mother Love Bone, an unambiguous grasp for arena rock grandiloquence fronted by Malfunkshun's captivating vocalist Andrew Wood that got lost in the industry machine and ended tragically with the singer's death from a heroin overdose in 1990. From the ashes emerged Pearl Jam, with a new

for the label right there. But Mudhoney were incredible. As soon as I saw them I was like, "This is a world-class band."

"The Lame Fest [9 June, 1989] was a key moment. The manager sent half the security staff home because he assumed nobody was going to show up. There were almost riots in the theatre. I remember Sonic Youth's soundman went, 'I've been all over the world with Sonic Youth and this is unique.'

"It was a gruelling financial effort for years. In spring '91, the whole company was on lockdown, it was essentially

just me and Jon. Then, two miracles happened. First, Mudhoney decided to bless us with Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge. It sold 100,000 copies. And then, Nevermind. We had some lucky breaks. For Jon and I, it was a humbling, bonding experience.

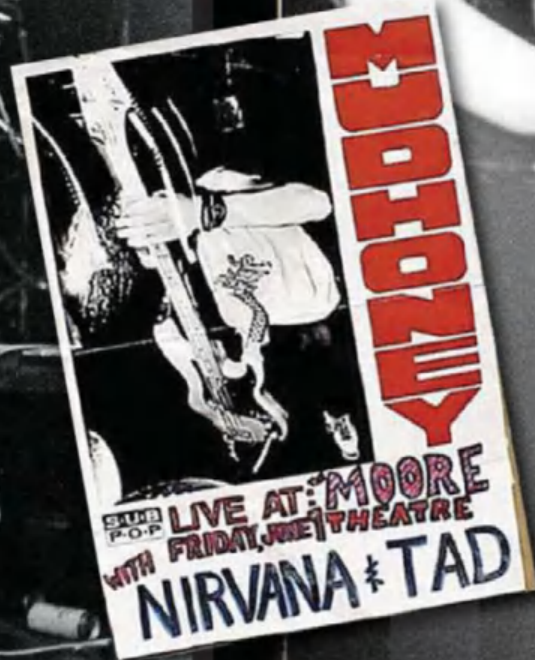
"Since then I've written two books - Experiencing Nirvana and Sub Pop USA - and now I'm launching 8Stem, an interactive app that allows listeners to remix tracks and share them on social media. I think it's gonna revolutionise the music industry.

Sub Pop founders Jonathan Poneman (left) and Bruce Pavitt: "We had some lucky breaks."



THE BIRTH OF GRUNGE

Mudhoney's Mark Arm and (far right) TAD's Tad Doyle, Astoria, London, 3 December 1989. (Centre) a fly poster for Lame Fest at Seattle's Moore Theatre, June '89.



GrUnge WITNESS

Tad Doyle

Then: TAD
Now: Brothers Of The Sonic Cloth

“ I grew up in Boise, Idaho, and when I was 26 I moved to Seattle with my band, H-Hour. I was playing drums, but I wanted to quit, so I bought a guitar and taught myself. I started putting together TAD. I took my tax return money, about 600 bucks, and recorded

three songs at Reciprocal with Jack Endino. I had gotten a job at Muzak in the same area as Bruce Pavitt and Mark Arm, and I brought the tape into work. Bruce said, ‘What’s this, the new Butthole Surfers?’ I grinned ear to ear because I idolised those guys. I said, ‘No, it’s a thing I just did.’

He said, ‘You did this?’ I said, ‘Yeah, I recorded all the drums, bass, guitar and vocals myself.’ He was stoked. ‘We need to put this out on the label...’

“Before TAD started I played second guitar in Bundle Of Hiss, which was Kurt Danielson, Dan Peters and Jamie Lane. They played with H-Hour at a few shows, and we hit it off. They found out I had quit H-Hour and

wanted me to play second drums with them, Butthole Surfers-style, but I didn’t really gel with Dan’s style. So I went onto guitar and TAD became me, Kurt, Gary Thorstensen and Steve Wied.

“Sub Pop were marketing geniuses. Bruce and Jon would take something and augment the story. Kurt Danielson had grown up in a logging town in Washington state, and I used to cut cork wood. I was no stranger to an axe and a chainsaw. So they incorporated that into their spiel. It certainly helped us but it might have hurt us in a way. We did identify with the subculture of rednecks: monster truck rallies and trailers and drug and alcohol abuse. That’s what we grew up around. A lot of people assumed the characters we were singing about were us, and I think there is still that mentality which feels that’s all we were, redneck dumb-

asses. But that’s not the case. We were *educated* redneck dumb-asses...

“I learned a lot from all the engineers we worked with. We had Endino on God’s Balls, Steve Albini on Salt Lick, and 8-Way Santa was with Butch Vig... The Butch Vig recording went so well that Sub Pop suggested he work with Nirvana. Actually, every guy we ever recorded with we did so before Nirvana. Nirvana went there because they liked what they heard with us.

“Travelling the world with a band, you can get into some bad stuff. I was seduced by some of the darker crevices of rock’n’roll, but I lived through it. All those things were leading up to what I’m doing now with Brothers Of The Sonic Cloth. All the mistakes I made in the past are nothing but learning tools. I have a lot of tools in my tool chest. It helps me make better decisions. **”**



Tad Doyle: “I was seduced by some of the darker crevices of rock’n’roll.”

DUPLICATE
TRANSPARENCY

DUPLICATE
TRANSPARENCY



EASTMAN—SAFETY—KODAK

“We identified with the subculture of rednecks: monster truck rallies, trailers and drug and alcohol abuse.”
Tad Doyle

vocalist Eddie Vedder, resolved to take a different path. “With Mother Love Bone we were just along for the ride,” says Ament. “When we did get the second chance with Pearl Jam we took the reins back.”

Mark Arm, meanwhile, felt relieved to be free from Green River. “I had been somewhat frustrated with the impulses that they had. I just didn’t know what I was going to do next.”

What he did next was form Mudhoney, with Steve Turner, Matt Lukin and drummer Dan Peters, who dropped the first grunge-era jukebox classic with their debut single, Touch Me I’m Sick. Melding hardcore intensity with the carefree debauch of ’60s psychedelic rock, Mudhoney became the vanguard for Pavitt and Poneman’s genius hucksterism. In June 1989, the assumption that no Seattle band could sell out a show at the city’s Moore Theatre was demolished by Sub Pop’s Lame Fest, where Mudhoney, Tad and Nirvana provoked riotous scenes that foresaw the impact these bands’ performances would wreak upon the UK. Sub Pop’s schemers might have been shaky on the mechanics of contracts and royalties, but they knew how to spin the music media with their mythologised tales of characters such as Tad

Doyle, an 18-stone chainsaw-wielding butcher whose songs satirised redneck culture. “It was an absolute phenomenon,” says Pavitt. “Seeing the UK music press describing Nirvana as Sub Pop’s Beatles – I knew then we were on the right track.”

In August 1991, walking down Seattle’s First Avenue en route to the Sub Pop office, Bruce Pavitt saw his face on the front cover of both Seattle alternative papers. The Rocket’s headline was curt: “Sub Pop?” Earlier that year, Pavitt and Poneman were forced to lay off their entire staff. “Then, a month later, Smells Like Teen Spirit is released and then Nevermind,” he says. “By Christmas of ’91 I knew that Sub Pop was going to be getting a cheque for half a million dollars just from Nirvana sales.” The only contract Sub Pop had signed with any of its bands was with Nirvana, ironically at Nirvana’s behest.

"When the right thing collides with the right time, you never know what's going to happen."

Jonathan Poneman,
Sub Pop co-founder



(Above) Pearl Jam in Melkweg, Amsterdam, February 1992; (inset) PJ bassist Jeff Ament: "We were all in the fog, trying to bring each other along."

GrUnge
WITNESS

Jeff Ament

Then: Green River, Mother Love Bone, Pearl Jam **Now:** Pearl Jam

"One of my good friends, Randy Pepprock, was in a punk rock band in Missoula, Montana called Who Killed Society. He moved to Seattle in 1982 and we visited him - we saw The Who and The Clash, and X played the Showbox the night before. We stayed in touch, then Randy sent over the first week's shows at the Metropolis: there was Really Red and Channel 3. Man, two of my favourite bands, *playing the same week!* I wanted to be where I could see that music, be around more like-minded people. So I started making plans.

"I saw Mark [Arm] and Steve [Turner] at that X show. They were stagediving, Alex Shumway was part of the deal too. I saw all those guys at the

Metropolis a year later when I moved to Seattle, doing the same thing at a Butthole Surfers show. We recorded demos within weeks of starting Green River - you can hear more hardcore than in later versions of the band. Mark's still finding his voice. But I really like it. You can hear the youthfulness.

"Mark was on my side in wanting to be heavier. We were gravitating towards Motörhead and Venom. Mark said, 'I have an idea for a second guitar player', and mentioned Stone [Gossard]. The way Stone played and wrote was so different from Steve. The second record, with Jack Endino - Dry As A Bone, that's the truest Green River record in terms of sound. The other two, we were trying

something beyond what we were capable of.

"Jon and Bruce at Sub Pop were the first non-musicians who actually believed in Seattle music. I remember Lame Fest - we were making the Mother Love Bone record, being super-jealous: 'Wow, they're playing the Moore Theatre!' Mother Love Bone only made a few records. You'd walk into a store and go, 'Oh look, Mudhoney just put out their third single and we haven't done anything.' We were on a major label, we had financial backing; Mudhoney were on Sub Pop. It was confusing: we had everything, yet we somehow didn't have the power.

"When Pearl Jam were going to sign with Sony, it was contingent on us being able to

do things differently. We wanted to write songs and get out and play them for 20 or 30 shows before recording. Consequently, it helped us make that first Pearl Jam record. The success of Ten... we got through it OK. There's a handful of times when we could have had more brilliant conversations about what was going on. We were all in the fog, trying to bring each other along. We were being given opportunities we'd never had in 10 years of playing music, so it was really hard to say no to Neil Young, or Keith Richards, even though it probably would've benefited us to have taken a step back. But it all worked out.



The commercial magnitude of Nevermind changed lives, not always for the better. In quick time, both Soundgarden and Pearl Jam felt the afterburn, and wrestled with the imperatives of making great art in a corporatised environment. So too on a smaller level did Mudhoney. That band and Pearl Jam survived, and the briefly estranged Green River factions healed their differences. Soundgarden sundered, but have since reunited, ironically now sharing their drummer with Pearl Jam. Nirvana, of course, exist in a different place, beyond earthly orbit. At least Kurt Cobain got what he wanted. “Nobody had a better voice than him,” reflects Jonathan Poneman. “When the right thing collides with the right time, you never know what’s going to happen.”

More so than most, the story of grunge is best told in pictures. As an aspiring photographer, Charles Peterson would decorate the flat he shared with Mark Arm with life-size prints of his friends’ bands,

thereby giving Bruce Pavitt the notion of placing these black-and-white action paintings at the forefront of Sub Pop’s iconography. Over 25 years later, at the Seattle EMP museum’s Taking Punk To The Masses exhibition, Peterson’s images are blown up across entire hallways. Most spectacular is a balletic Kurt Cobain caught mid-stage dive. But two other shots catch the eye: one is from a Replacements gig in 1983, but it doesn’t feature the band at all. Rather, Peterson has turned his lens on the crowd at the Metropolis. At the centre of the frame, in slam-dance euphoria, is a 21-year-old Mark Arm; next to him, the 18-year-old Steve Turner. The other picture features Arm and Turner five years later, playing with Mudhoney at Seattle’s Central Tavern. This is grunge *in excelsis*. In the foreground, a hand reaches out for a can of Schmidt beer. And on the far right of the frame sits a figure, head bowed and arms thrust aloft, as if hailing the coming of a new god. It’s Bruce Pavitt, attaining nirvana. 🇺🇸



Nirvana (from left, Dave Grohl, Krist Novoselic, Kurt Cobain) 1991: “they exist in a different place, beyond earthly orbit...”

Smells, Like Teen Spirit

From freak scene beginnings to platinum-selling world domination, **Keith Cameron** picks the best grunge records ever made.

Green River Come On Down

(Homestead, EP, 1985)

The debut Green River release offers, albeit in primitive form, the root grunge equation: Sabbath dirge plus punk scratchings and a creepy atmosphere of gothic Americana. The six-tracker's standouts are all on side one: the ominous title track, pounding New God, then Swallow My Pride, a psycho-sexual

satire on allegiance to the flag set to a quintessentially barbed Steve Turner riff. Portents for the band's future schism, however, lurked in the unhelpfully complex Tunnel Of Love.



"I think there's koi carp nibbling my bits": Soundgarden, 1987; (below) their debut EP, from the same year.



Soundgarden Screaming Life

(Sub Pop, EP, 1987) They would amply refine the core

elements over the years, but Soundgarden's pure essence was delivered intact and fully-formed on their debut EP: dense guitar webs, drop-D tunings – as inspired by Tony Iommi via the Melvins – off-kilter time signatures and Chris Cornell's helium scream. As producer Jack Endino later observed of the keynote track: "Nothing To Say was the song that made us all look at each other and go, 'Uh, holy crap, how did we do this?'"



Let it slide: Mudhoney show off their “carefree genius”, Seattle, 1988.

Essential GRUNGE



Mudhoney Superfuzz Bigmuff

(Sub Pop, EP, 1988)

Recorded in seven days by Jack Endino, Mudhoney's first EP was an astonishing affirmation of their carefree genius, proving that preceding single *Touch Me I'm Sick* was no fluke. Drummer Dan Peters was revealed as the band's not-so-secret weapon, powering the Wipers-homage *No One Has and the Butthole Surfers*-via-Blue Cheer splurge of *In 'n' Out Of Grace* into moshpit oblivion. Thurston Moore sagely declared it “Mudhoney's Never Mind The Bollocks... like six seven-inches on an LP.”

Melvins Gluey Porch Treatments



(Alchemy, LP, 1987)

The debut album by the Montesano megaliths remains startlingly alien, which is no mean feat given how avidly

its elemental toil blueprints were absorbed by everyone from Nirvana to Sunn O))), With frontman and lead guitarist Buzz Osborne shrieking like an avant-garde Gene Simmons, and the Dale Crover-Matt Lukin rhythm section nailing a subterranean low-end with nightmarish precision, this is an abstract aural freak-zone. The band's 1993 Atlantic debut *Houdini* – which was produced by Kurt Cobain – is a friendlier prospect, but *Gluey Porch Treatments* is definitive.



Dinosaur Jr. You're Living All Over Me

(SST, LP, 1987)

The Massachusetts trio shared kinship with their peers in Seattle's grunge nexus: forged in hardcore, relaxed about metal, Dinosaur Jr.'s version of rock was both anti-virtuosic and gonzo, definitively rendered here on their greatest set of songs. Sub Pop co-founders Bruce Pavitt and Jonathan Poneman would later fall out over whether the label should break the bank to sign the J Mascis troupe, but the Seattle label did at least release classic Dino Jr 45 *The Wagon*.

Various: Sub Pop 200

(Sub Pop, LP, 1988)

In the original boxset version, Sub Pop 200 was an exorbitant example of its creators' shameless brand marketing: a triple-vinyl boxset featuring heartland scene stars (Mudhoney, Nirvana, Soundgarden, TAD) alongside other Pacific Northwest acts (*Fastbacks*, *The Walkabouts*, *Screaming Trees*, *Beat Happening*) outside the grunge template who were thus co-opted to bolster the vision of Sub Pop as the only viable custodian of Seattle's rock city credentials. The booklet's parody portraits of Pavitt and Poneman as suited moguls sealed the deal.



Essential GRUNGE



Nirvana Bleach

(Sub Pop, LP, 1989)

Retrospective appraisals are wont to frown over its debts to the Melvins' bludgeon riffola – as if the Melvins were household names in 1989 – and grumble that *About A Girl* is the solitary example of Kurt Cobain's transformative potential. Yet Nirvana's debut album encapsulated frenzied young talent already operating on an exponential upward curve. Once again, producer Jack Endino proved himself the champion of no-frills, low-end muscularity, while Cobain's screams on *School* and *Negative Creep* broke hearts and blew minds.

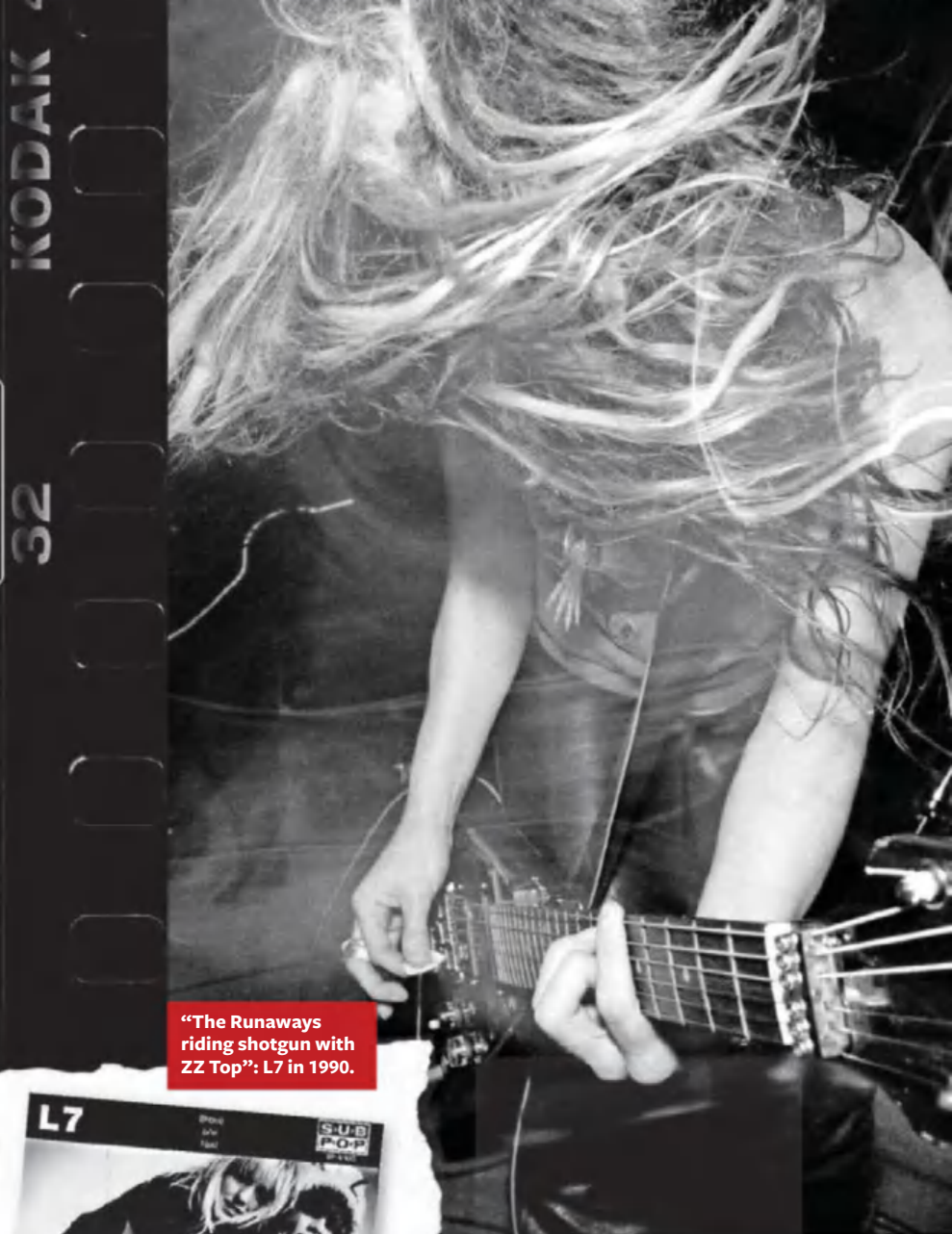
Screaming Trees Change Has Come



(Sub Pop, EP, 1989)

Fronted by taciturn Mark Lanegan but driven by fractious siblings Gary

Lee and Van Conner, the Screaming Trees hailed from Ellensburg, a college town on the other side of the Cascade Mountains from Seattle. They sounded suitably removed from the grunge meltdown, with Lanegan's grandiloquent Jim Morrison croon lending deep reserves of pathos to the Conners' edgy psychedelic tapestries. *Change Has Come* was an early peak for a band whose true majesty emerged on '90s epics *Sweet Oblivion* and *Dust*.



"The Runaways riding shotgun with ZZ Top": L7 in 1990.



L7 Shove

(Sub Pop, 7-inch single, 1990)

Featuring a couple of U-Men and other Seattle scenesters, Cat Butt were insufficiently equipped to transcend their name, yet they earned grunge hero status for tipping Sub Pop to Los Angeles femme foursome L7. Like The Runaways riding shotgun with ZZ Top, this Jack Endino-produced single was the first of many inimitable boot-girl anthems. Major league hits followed (*Pretend We're Dead*) but *Shove's* declaration of principles – "Get out of my way or I'm gonna shove!" – was never bettered.

Afghan Whigs Retarded

(Sub Pop, 12-inch single, 1990)

From Cincinnati and arguably Sub Pop's most fruitful foray beyond the Pacific Northwest, Afghan Whigs

simmered down The Temptations, Led Zeppelin and The Replacements into a glutinous black-hearted brew that felt both familiar and risky. Much of the latter quality stemmed from singer Greg Dulli's delight in probing the limits of his listeners' liberal instincts. *Retarded* is the pick of their Endino-produced early SP work; this version adds the bonus of non-album single *Sister Brother* (miscegenation as incest, anyone?).





TAD 8-Way Santa

(Sub Pop, LP, 1991)

After assaulting ears and brain cells with two ultra-heavy slabs of Butthole Surfers-meets-Killing Joke pummel, Tad Doyle's quartet teamed with producer Butch Vig and pushed their melodic sensibilities to the foreground. It's possible that TAD's erstwhile tour-mate Kurt Cobain was taking notes. Two arguably foreseeable misfortunes stymied momentum:

a couple objected to the use of their photograph on the album sleeve, then Pepsi sued for copyright infringement over the sleeve design of the single Jack Pepsi.



Mudhoney Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge

(Sub Pop, LP, 1991)

Sensing a slide into formula – sludgy Jack Endino-production; long hair; songs about sickness or dogs – Mudhoney went to the barbers, then revitalised themselves. Their first recording without Endino was also their strongest full-length, crammed with finger-clicking garage groovers like 'Who You Drivin' Now?', which harked back to the original '60s Seattle punks The Sonics. Crashing the UK Top 40 on waves of incipient grunge-mania, Fudge saved Sub Pop from bankruptcy.



Maybe stylists aren't such a bad invention: Pearl Jam, 1991.



Pearl Jam Ten

(Epic, LP, 1991)

Erroneously dismissed as the corporate rock quisling to Nevermind's paragon of artistic virtue, for the debut Pearl Jam album to eclipse every other record of the era – well over 10 million sales to date – was hardly inevitable. The band had existed for less than six months when they recorded it, and the overcompensatory production gloss gave Ten a generic feel that ill-serves its material. But the battle was fought onstage and on MTV, where Eddie Vedder's intense showmanship won hearts and minds. »



Hole Pretty On The Inside



(City Slang, LP, 1991)

While both Live Through This and Celebrity Skin are better albums, it's impossible to decipher the myth and madness of Courtney Love without immersion

in Hole's debut, not least because it's her only record made without the distorting taint of infamy. Pretty On The Inside is a screeching lurch through the looking glass of a brilliant mind and destructive soul, offering out enemies and lovers with extreme prejudice. Co-produced by Kim Gordon, its calculating shock tactics were certainly effective.

Nirvana Nevermind

(DGC, LP, 1991)

As revolutions go, Nirvana's began quietly. Twelve days after its 23 September, 1991 release, Nevermind entered the UK chart at Number 36. Three weeks later it had dropped to 73. It's possible that more people would have bought it had they been able to, but MCA, which distributed Geffen Records in the UK, had pressed only 6000 copies. Nirvana were invisible in mainstream terms: an indie rock band from a remote corner of America with just one album, a couple of singles and two John Peel sessions to their name. They enjoyed cult appeal in the UK, but few regarded the modest mid-afternoon billing at 1991's Reading Festival an affront to their status.

In the US, the story was comparable, albeit on a larger scale: Geffen shipped a mere 35,000 copies initially and would have been happy to have sold that number in a year. They had a new Guns N' Roses album to worry about after all. But as the band began a nationwide tour in Boston on release day, in tandem to Smells Like Teen Spirit gaining traction on MTV, a word-of-mouth phenomenon was unleashed. That tour was scheduled to finish with two dates in the band's Pacific Northwest heartland with their friends and erstwhile Sub Pop labelmates Mudhoney. Nirvana




A "permanent revolution": Nevermind, 1991; (right) Nirvana in the same year.

would headline Portland on 29 October, and Mudhoney in Seattle on Halloween. By the time they met up, the landscape had transformed: Nevermind was gold-certified and entering the US Top 40. Obviously, Nirvana headlined both gigs. Ten weeks later, their album displaced Michael Jackson's Dangerous at Number 1 in the US, and finally entered the UK Top 20.

But although the sheer magnitude of its commercial breakthrough was unforeseeable, Nevermind's acceptance by a mass market nonetheless made perfect sense. However subversive its creators' intent, this album was conceived, designed and executed deliberately to appeal to the widest possible audience. Kurt Cobain gave plenty warning of that: on their 1990 UK tour Nirvana's set featured a core of songs that would appear on Nevermind, including future hit singles In Bloom and Lithium. In an interview he declared, "a good song is the most important thing... the only way to really touch someone."

On Nevermind, he finally had the personnel to imprint his vision with indelible force: producer Butch Vig, who gently but firmly coaxed from Cobain the vocals that would define hurt for the ages, and drummer Dave Grohl, whose radio-friendly approximation of the Melvins' Dale Crover provided a thunderous bedrock for Kurt's candied lightning bolts. Without Dave Grohl, there would have been no Smells Like Teen Spirit. And without Teen Spirit, the world today would look very different.

Subsequently, amid the turmoil

that became his life, Kurt Cobain would repudiate Nevermind as a compromised piece of product. Which was true, of course: that was the record he wanted to make, because he knew these songs deserved to be heard. Twenty five years later, we're still singing Kurt's songs. Let's call it permanent revolution. 

sky ARTS

You can watch a documentary on Nirvana's Nevermind album on the Sky Arts channel.

Nirvana: Classic Albums
Live on Sky Arts channel –
Friday, 22 April, 8pm
Ex-Nirvana band members Krist Novoselic and Dave Grohl discuss the creation of the seminal Nevermind album that defined a genre, and the legacy of Kurt Cobain.



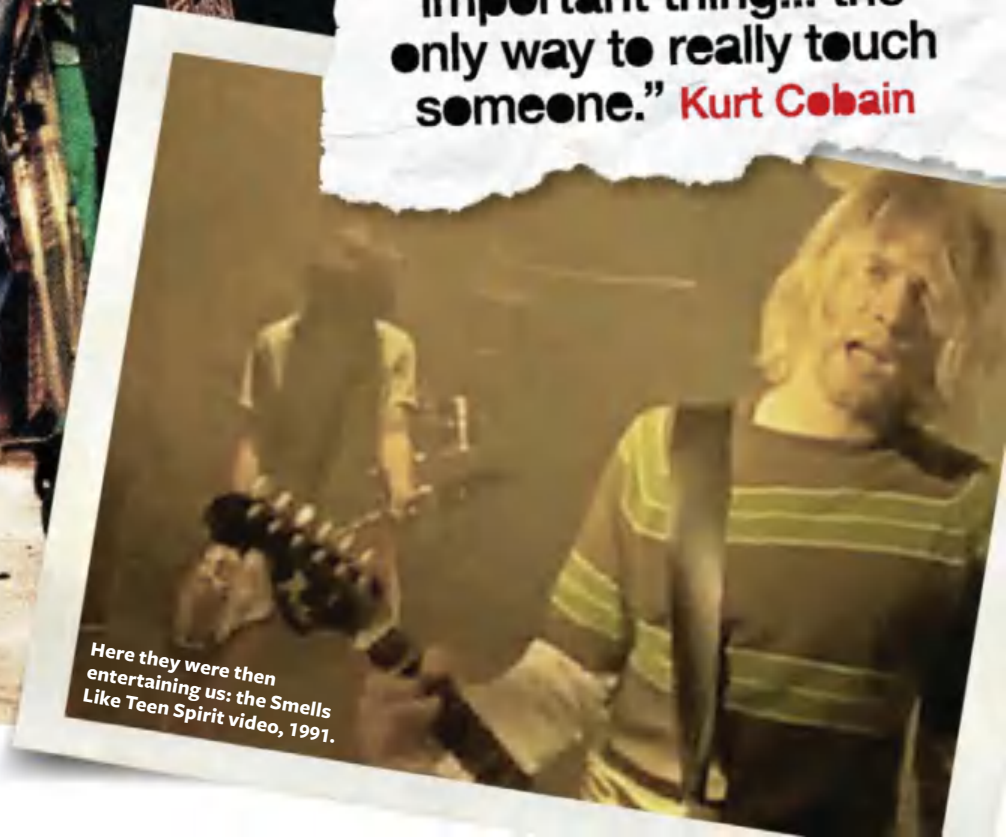
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**EssentiAl
GRUNGE**



“A good song is the most important thing... the only way to really touch someone.” Kurt Cobain

Here they were then
entertaining us: the Smells
Like Teen Spirit video, 1991.





CATE LE BON'S MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

Her parents celebrated her birthday on the wrong day. She grew up taking her goat on walks in the Welsh countryside. Her new album, *Crab Day*, is named after an alternative to April Fools' Day. [Andrew Perry](#) puts on an angular hat and steps through the looking glass with [Cate Le Bon](#). ➔

PHOTOGRAPHS ALEX LAKE

CATE LE BON

Off the wall: Cate Le Bon,
Trackside Studios, East
London, 14 March, 2016.



In near-total darkness at Chats Palace in East London, the strange world of Cate Le Bon is slowly unfolding. The tiny stage is crammed with six musicians, playing a preliminary set of instrumentals best described as “Aphex Twin goes jazz”, their hypnotic rhythms propelled not by drums, but the marimba and xylophone which dominate the cramped performance space. The ensemble’s given name for this part of the performance: Banana.

Le Bon herself, the supposed star of this launch show for her fourth solo album, *Crab Day*, is tucked away at the back, all but invisible behind a piano. Also hard to pick out in the gloom is Josh Klinghoffer, aka guitarist in Red Hot Chili Peppers, who has chosen to spend the week before mixing on his main band’s latest opus commences, schlepping around Europe in a Transit van, serving his friend Cate’s wayward muse.

Le Bon, an enigmatic singer of poleaxing purity yet also beyond-rational weirdness, has this magnetic effect on people. Originally from West Wales but latterly resident in Los Angeles, she first surfaced in 2007 as a protégée of Gruff Rhys from Super Furry Animals. She’s since toured with St. Vincent, and guested on recent albums by Manic Street Preachers and The Chemical Brothers.

Initially pegged as a psychedelic-folk version of frosty Velvet Underground chanteuse Nico, her music has become increasingly unusual, thanks to a curiously poppy twist which crystallised on 2013’s third album, *Mug Museum*. *Crab Day*, as its title implies, is a good deal spikier, with avant-rock guitar scratchings reminiscent of Captain Beefheart’s *Trout Mask Replica*, and lyrics of an equally off-beam tenor.

The title, for instance, is her suggestion for an alternative public holiday.

“Well,” the 33-year-old clarifies over



If the ker-razy hat fits, wear it:
Le Bon, onstage at Chats Palace,
East London, 14 March, 2016.

herbal tea before the Chats Palace show, “it was actually my niece who came up with it, when she was four. It was April Fools’ Day a few years ago, and she thought it was absolutely ridiculous and horrible that there’s a day dedicated to playing tricks on people. So she just went, ‘Nah, today’s Crab Day’, and she sat down all day drawing pictures of crabs with different hairstyles.

“Everything is bloody made up anyway, isn’t it?” she concludes, with a

characteristically oblivious smile. “So now, as a family, we wish each other Happy Crab Day on 1 April. It means something to us, even if it doesn’t to anyone else. And that’s how I feel about the music as well.”

As we shall see, the girl born Cate Timothy comes from a background of defying the norm, flouting stuffy conventions, and making things up as you go along.

Between sets at Chats Palace, screened images show drag queens posing against



(Above left) With guitarist and ex-boyfriend, Huw Evans; (right) backstage at Chats Palace, with her backing band, featuring Red Hot Chili Pepper, Josh Klinghoffer (third left).



"For six years, we celebrated my birthday on the wrong day. My parents were like, 'Yeah, whatever, get over it!'"

walls with drool running out of their mouths, as well as other alternative types – occasionally including Ms Le Bon – stumbling with near-unwatchable awkwardness on camera. The 200-strong audience laugh along uneasily.

These scenes are from a short movie made by avant-garde film-maker Phil Collins (not that one), apparently to help promote Crab Day. Le Bon says it's about making the viewer feel uncomfortable – scarcely watertight marketing logic, if you're aiming for the multi-platinum league.

She has a history of provoking queasy feelings with her videos. In the one for 2009's *Shoelace The Bones*, she has a close domestic relationship with a horse, and is depicted wiping its bottom. "Casey Raymond, the director, wanted me to do something far worse," she notes, "which I nearly did, until Gruff advised me that I didn't want to be remembered as the girl who did that in a video."

In the beginning, the Super Furries frontman definitely had his work cut out in nurturing young Cate's raw talent. She'd grown up in the village of Penboyr in rural Carmarthenshire.

"My father was a town planner," she says, "not a pig farmer, as is sometimes written. We had this wonderful outdoor life. My older sister and I each had a goat, and we'd go on long walks with the goats in tow. We'd be climbing trees, making dams in rivers, and getting home just before dark. It was lovely."

The Timothys, though, were a little eccentric. "For six years, we celebrated my birthday on the wrong day," she recalls, laughing gaily. Her parents duly unearthed some medical documents which stated she'd been born a day later than they'd remembered. "They were like, 'Yeah, whatever, get over it!'" My song, *I Was Born On The Wrong Day*, is an ode to that, and an ode to thinking, "Well, does it matter?"

Her background in singing was, she says, the antithesis of the Welsh choral tradition,

which is all about technical precision. Young Cate Timothy rebelled against all that by miming in her school choir. She preferred family singalongs to her dad's mixtapes, which ranged from Crowded House to Pavement.

Aged 13, she had a defining musical epiphany when she and her sister travelled to see SFA at the V96 Festival in Warrington, where her mother's family reside. "Gruff was sat among the audience, for most of it," she recalls. "It felt

wild, psychedelic, unhinged, *really* exciting."

She was brought up bilingually, so the fact that SFA often sang in their native Celtic tongue inspired her to break free of any



Celtic connections: onstage with mentor Gruff Rhys, in Neon Neon, Norway, 2008.

insecurity about making it as an international pop star, and think more about communicating meaningfully, on however small a scale.

After A-levels, she swerved university, moved to Cardiff to pursue music, and soon fell into the same orbit as her Welsh heroes.

Circa 2003, she met the two outsider musicians who've been at her side ever since – Stephen Black, aka Sweet Baboo, and Huw Evans, son of a Welsh broadcasting celebrity, who uses the alias, H Hawkline. He and Cate quickly became an item.

"For my first gig," she says, "Huw just booked a venue, to give me a deadline to actually finish writing my songs. He basically twisted my arm and dragged me there."

He also made a poster, billing her as Cate Le Bon, to rib her for voicing her admiration for Duran Duran's singer while watching that year's Brit Awards on TV. She's never got around to changing it.



After a few such pub shows, in 2006, Gruff Rhys spotted her and that very night invited her to support SFA in Cardiff. "Which was just insane to me," she

laughs. He encouraged her to cut 2008's Welsh-language EP, *Edrych Yn Llygaid Ceffyl Benthig*, which, she concedes, "ended up pretty fucking bad".

Undeterred, Rhys soon enlisted her to duet with him on his techno-pop side project Neon Neon's single, *I Lust U*, and whisked her off in the ensuing touring band, alongside Josh Klinghoffer, pre-RHCP. Suddenly, she was living the dream.

Back at Chats Palace, Cate's crack team – Klinghoffer, Evans and Black, plus Warpaint's Stella Mozgawa, and Josiah Steinbrick from Devendra Banhart's band – rematerialise onstage wearing matching hats and eyeliner.

This time, the sextet rattle through Crab Day, in full. In the flesh, its ebb-and-flow from austere tub-thumping and angular guitars, to seductive melodies and soothing instrumental touches, is all the more stunning, albeit unsustainable in this format.

As Le Bon's manager, Alun Llwyd, smirkingly observes, "I know how much everyone's getting paid – Josh definitely ain't doing it for the money!"

Klinghoffer himself is full of admiration for Le Bon's songcraft. "It's a beautiful mixture of a pop sensibility with interesting arrangements and structures," he enthuses. "Things just don't happen as they're supposed to."

Her progress to this fourth album has been lovingly homespun and haphazard, ever courtesy of titchy labels. Sung mostly in English, the morbid lyrical themes on her sparse, psych-folk debut, *Me Oh My*, »



"There's a lack of mystique in music nowadays": Cate "No relation to Simon" Le Bon.

inspired by the frequent bereavement that country-dwellers suffer when beloved animals die – goats included.

Her second album, 2012's *Cyrk*, was more fully embellished and cohesive, its songs all inspired by a folk festival she appeared at on the Inner Hebridean island of Eigg. Touring that, she learnt much from another pedagogue, St. Vincent's Annie Clark, who gives everything onstage, yet also maintains a dignified distance as an artist.

"There's a severe lack of mystique within music nowadays," she believes. "You're just meant to give it all away, and not hold anything back. Annie taught me a lot about that." Accordingly, Le Bon won't go near Facebook, and is only on Instagram "reluctantly, strictly for band stuff".

Perhaps the key turning point in her life came when she and Evans picked indie-psych oddballs White Fence to support them, at a show of her own in Santa Monica. Talking afterwards with WF keyboard player, Josiah Steinbrick, Le Bon casually mentioned her desire to cut a record in California. "Little did I know," she smiles, "he's a master of kidnapping people and making things happen."

"Sometimes the romantic wheels fall off but I still think Huw's one of the greatest people ever and he's my favourite guitarist."

The next year, she duly recorded *Mug Museum* in L.A., and she and Evans effectively never returned home, shacking up together

in a bohemian, musicianly community in the Eastside neighbourhoods of Highland Park and South Pasadena.

"Living in Cardiff," she explains, "it's all well and good just being able to afford to pay your bills and live, but when it's pissing it down and you're in the house all the time, it's fucking shit. The cost of

living is the same in Los Angeles, and taking a walk in the park in the sunshine is free, and it's glorious!"

The Californian albums – *Mug Museum* (2013) and *Crab Day* (2016).



Mug Museum, though, was about goings-on in her family back home, after her maternal grandmother passed away. *Crab Day* is a more difficult nut to crack – intentionally more cryptic. It was made with the Banana crew, minus Klinghoffer, at a residential studio in Stinson Beach, just north of San Francisco. This fabulous setting allowed "complete abandonment and freedom", with epic cliff-top walks and morning swims in the Pacific. Its lyrics were, as usual, penned in an "amazing delirium" on the night before sessions began.

"It doesn't pay to sing your songs," Le Bon intones four times at the title track's inception, as if to serve notice that since *Mug Museum*'s accessible charms yielded no deluge of cash, she'll be doing exactly as she pleases this time around.

Otherwise, the songs are, by her admission, "a coalition of inescapable feelings and fabricated nonsense". The nonsense part – oral sand dunes, cream shadows, dreams of copper calendars – was most likely influenced by childhood reading, she says, of the metaphysical poets, dada, and William Kotzwinkle's *The Fan Man*.

The "inescapable feelings" are represented by bucketfuls of tears, loss of possession, and a pervasively dim view of love. These, she's more cagey about – although, she's remarkably open about the fact that, after 12 years together, she and Evans broke up seven months ago, just after the LP's completion.

"Sometimes the romantic wheels fall off," she says, quietly, "and you have to acknowledge that, but I still think Huw's one of the greatest people ever to walk the planet, and he's my favourite guitarist ever."

So, Evans remains in her band, and in the scaled-down, four-piece line-up that's due to tour *Crab Day* from tonight onwards. Which will surely be difficult.

"Yeah, it's quite unusual," she agrees, smiling wanly, "but instead of being frightened of the awkwardness, you have to embrace it, so you can get to the next bit."

So a song such as *Love Is Not Love*, with its amusing images of people's differing understanding of what love entails ("love is not love, when it's a coathanger", etc) is not at all autobiographical?

She's silent for a good few moments. "Well, I don't know," she sighs, smiling. "One or two things probably creep in, huh?"

Emotionally and musically, *Crab Day* packs Le Bon's heaviest punch yet. Its impenetrable riddles, though, will lend it greater longevity than any mere break-up album. It's too early to call it her masterpiece: this story has only just begun.

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THE CROW BAR CINEMA PROGRAMME • PSYCHEDELIC LIGHTSHOWS
POETRY • TIPIS, BELL TENTS & LIVE IN VEHICLES • 10FT LASER ROBOT
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Dig The New Breed

Brand **Jack Garratt** sounds like Justin Timberlake crossed with Bon Iver and is taking over the world, powered by a highly ambitious CEO burnt by past misadventures. Just don't mention the beard, writes **Niall Doherty**.

JACK GARRATT

Man on a mission:
Jack Garratt, Austin,
Texas, 17 March, 2016.



R

Recently, a story was going round about a request that Jack Garratt made before a radio appearance. The tale is that as the interview began, one of Garratt's team scribbled a message on a piece of paper and slid it to the presenter. The note said three words: No Beard Talk. Garratt is the year's breakthrough star and the slick synth-pop of his debut album *Phase* went straight into the Top 5 in February. He also has a big, bushy, hipster barista beard. Could it be true that he really feels so

uncomfortable talking about it that he has people handing out warnings not to bring it up?

"Yes," says Garratt, confessing to the charge. He is sitting outside a coffee shop in Austin, Texas. It's a beautiful, sunny morning on the first day of the SXSW music festival and Garratt is putting his side of Beardgate forward. "It's not a diva request," he insists. "I asked beforehand not to talk about it because it doesn't interest anyone." Of course, not only is Garratt now having to talk about his beard, he's having to talk about the request not to talk about his beard too. "It's just hair on my face. You've got hair on your face," he says. "All the women I've ever met in my life have hair on their faces. Everyone I've ever met has hair on their face!" He lets out a cackle. Jack Garratt and his beard police have been busted.

Perhaps the 24-year-old from Buckinghamshire has a problem with things that are out of his control. He says he has only recently learned to delegate, accepting there are some tasks that need to be done by people outside of himself and "the core team of people who have been with me since the very beginning". He is part of a new breed of pop star, led by Taylor Swift and Ed Sheeran, who as well as making music see themselves as CEOs, team leaders, motivational speakers and HR departments of their own brand. "It's not that I'm paranoid or distrusting but I think that's the smart way to think about this industry, especially as a new artist," says Garratt. He wants to be in all the meetings with the head of his record label and he wants to "cut the fat out as soon as I can". Those who aren't pulling their weight are given the chop. His job, he says, is to work with the right people, people who are dedicated to the cause.

At the centre of his business model are some of the year's best pop anthems. His songs sound like an edgier Sheeran or a more euphoric James Blake, where melancholic crooning is often resolved by breaking out a thumping electro chorus. He says that "the acceleration in his career has been happening very steadily for the last four years" but there's no denying there's been a big upswing over the past few months. He arrived for this US tour knowing that every date had sold out and it's the same on his upcoming UK shows. However much he makes it sound like he's pitching to investors when he says that "it's been a very natural and organic growth from being an unsigned, undeveloped artist then development through my management and then upstreaming onto a record label", Garratt is in the midst of one of the most exciting rises in UK music.

Despite the business talk, there is something instantly likeable about Garratt. There's a slight exuberance to him. The jacket he's

He bangs the drum(pad):
Garratt feels the heat at
SXSW, Austin, 15 March, 2016.



**"It's just hair on my face.
You've got hair on your face.
All the women I've ever met
in my life have hair on their
faces. Everyone I've ever met
has hair on their face!"**

"Being outside for shows in the middle of the day is a tough gig. You're playing to people about to have a good time."

different instruments, they probably didn't mean all at once. But that's exactly what he's doing a few hours later on the outdoor stage at Spotify House, a SXSW pop-up venue on 6th Street. He has an electric guitar slung over his back and he's playing drumpads with one hand and keyboards with the other. Watching him play three instruments and sing all at the same time, you begin to question his assertion that he's learned to delegate. But, in the same way that people are enthralled by the looping technique Ed Sheeran employs for his live set, this manic one-man show has become Garratt's main attraction. The crowd are entranced by it and the approach adds an element of rock'n'roll risk-taking to his sophisticated electronica. He gives it everything to the point that he looks like he's going to pass out. It's 3pm and absolutely sweltering.

"I had a fan on me, but I don't think I could feel it," he says afterwards, sitting in his dressing room. "Being outside for shows in the middle of the day is a tough gig, cos you're playing to a bunch of people who are *about* to have a good time." Garratt says that doing gigs alone can be very challenging, and longer shows can feel like running a marathon. He tried rehearsing with a band for his gigs but it didn't click. He says it's not about hogging the spotlight and more that he'd written, recorded and mixed these songs himself so it made sense to perform them on his own. The songs on *Phase* are about a period in his life five years ago when everything fell apart. You imagine that might be one of the reasons why he has issues with anyone else playing them. »



(Above) Garratt's debut album *Phase*, which went Top 5 in February.

wearing is packed with florescent patches that make him look like he's starring in a nu-rave stage production of *Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. He has a childish bounce, like he might ask you to give him a piggyback at any given moment. He may be guilty of frequent mentions to his "art" and his "team", but he's also a bit daft and has the sort of loud laugh that makes people on other tables look over to see what they're missing out on. There's something of a children's TV presenter about him, albeit a swearsy one.

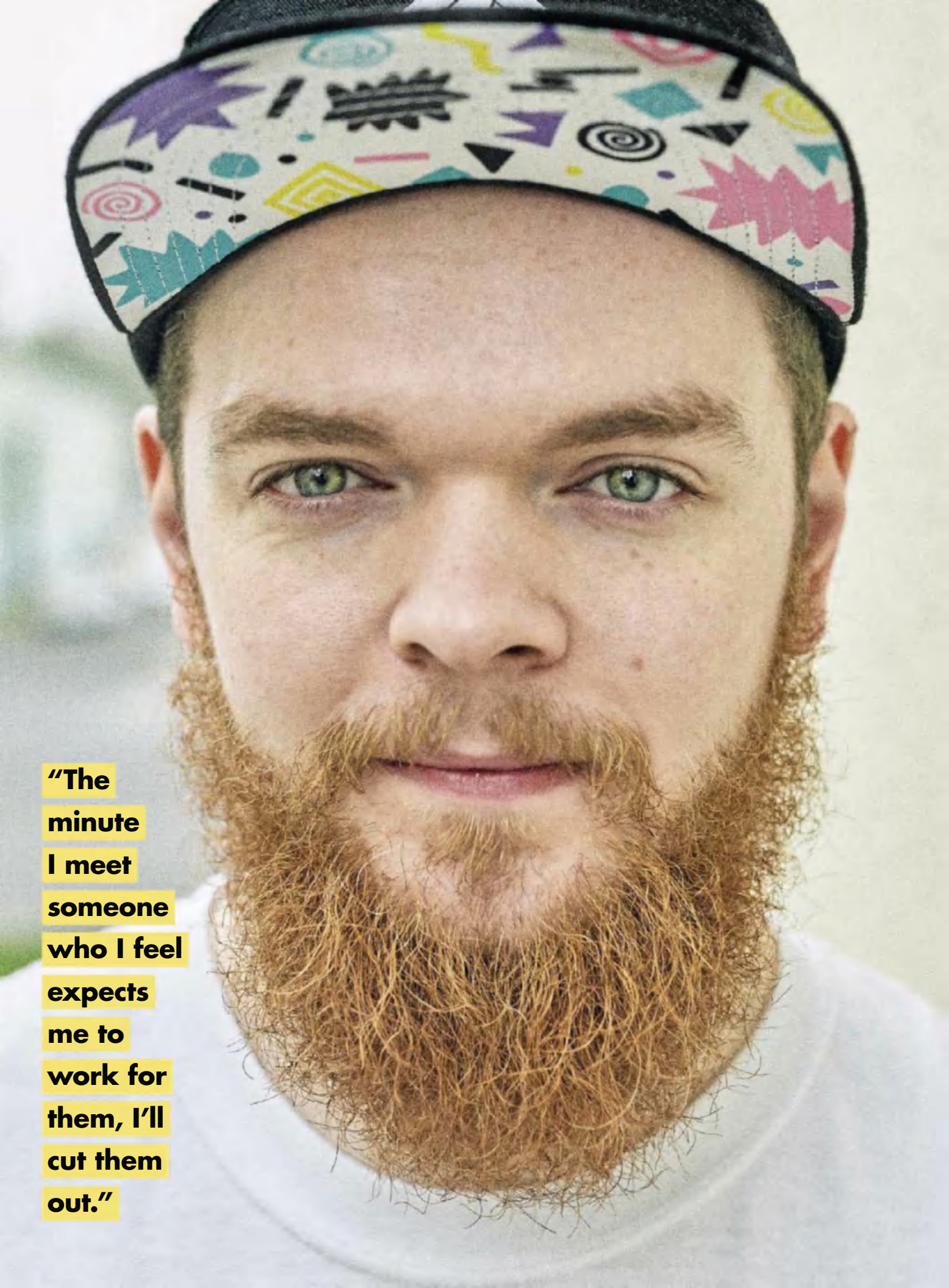
Garratt was brought up in Little Chalfont, a village on the outskirts of London that's the sort of place where ITV set their Sunday night murder mysteries. There were fields and greenery to gallop around in, although Garratt chose not to. "I decided to play instruments all the time and got really fat," he says. At school, he was loud and opinionated. His report cards often read, "If he engaged himself correctly, things would be great." His brother and sister are more academically suited than him, he says. He was very concerned with being accepted at school and would hop from group to group "trying to find somewhere to fit in". He realised he didn't really fit in anywhere, but in the process acquired a huge group of friends.

Music was a big thing in the Garratt house. Both his parents are musicians. His dad never did it professionally but his mum does it through teaching. "We all had to do piano lessons as kids," he says. Garratt got his first guitar when he was five and taught himself to play the James Bond theme tune. Soon after, his dad was playing Fleetwood Mac's *The Chain* so he taught himself that too. "My ears have always been able to pick up on that kind of stuff," he says.

When Garratt's parents encouraged their son to play lots of

Lone star: Garratt says being on his own on tour "sucks, but I chose to do it."





**"The
minute
I meet
someone
who I feel
expects
me to
work for
them, I'll
cut them
out."**

Jack Garratt in 2005: “Junior Eurovision was emotionally terrifying”; (inset) with friends (from left) Julia Stone, Sophia Bush and Aaron Paul.

Towards the end of 2011, Garratt had finished what he thought was his debut album, an acoustic blues record called Nickel & Dime. It was

about to be released through a local label in Buckinghamshire. There is YouTube footage of Garratt performing at The Drawingroom, Chesham in 2011. He’s clean-shaven and wearing a waistcoat and does a little speech, showing off about the forthcoming album. A few weeks later, though, Garratt woke up one day and realised he didn’t really like any of it. He binned the whole thing. “It was shitty, I was 19 and one minute it was ‘welcome to this big moment!’, then suddenly a week later, it was gone, there was nothing,” he says.

As he began to pull at the thread of why he’d been working on these songs when he wasn’t actually too keen on them, everything began to unravel. Garratt was a bit of a local hero as a teenager. He was a virtuoso blues guitarist with a voice that could howl. When he was 14, he appeared in the national final to find the British entry for the Junior Eurovision Song Contest 2005. His song, *The Girl*, came last. He was undeterred though, and soon began playing gigs at an arts café where he worked. The owner encouraged him and Garratt looked up to him as a paternal figure. By the time he was 19, though, Garratt began to feel like he was being used to sell tickets and that this person he held a lot of “respect and love” for was a bit of a fake. Fed up of pandering to an audience who wanted to see “this 14-year-old kid who could play guitar and sing really hard”, he pulled the plug on everything. He split up with his long-term girlfriend. He was miserable.

He wrote a song about it all, *I Couldn’t Want You Anyway*, that experimented with a new, electronic-heavy sound. It was a clean slate to work from. A brief period at Roehampton University studying primary education specialising in music (teaching was always his back-up option) ended when he quit to move to London to concentrate on his new songs. He did his first show with the one-man-doing-everything set-up in Shoreditch soon after, under the pseudonym of Vernon Lake because a friend had said that his new music sounded like a mix of Bon Iver’s Justin Vernon and Justin Timberlake.

Garratt considers himself a very safe person. He doesn’t like flying and he doesn’t like roller coasters. He likes having a good time but is wary of drinking too much because he doesn’t like the person he becomes. It’s why he thinks that turning his back on everything and moving to London is the most important choice he’s ever made. “I realised I was doing it all for other people, so I went, ‘OK, fuck it, let’s do something exciting and different,’” he says. He looks back on Junior Eurovision now and says that it was “emotionally terrifying.” “Music isn’t a competition,” he says. “It’s supposed to be all-encouraging.”

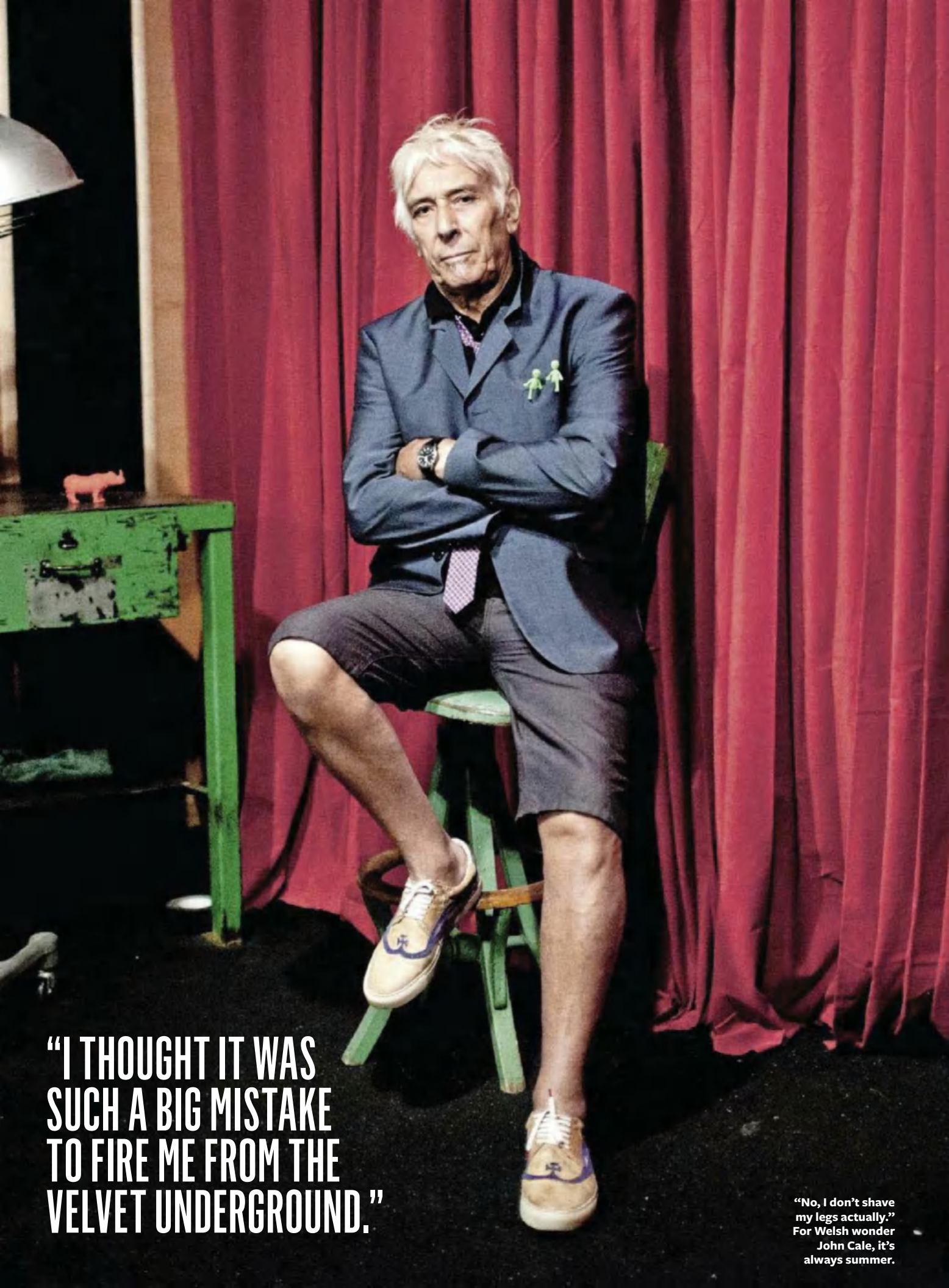
He learned from it. A few years later, he was approached by producers of *The Voice* to appear on the first series but said no. At one point, they were calling him every day but he stuck to his instinct. These days he maintains close control over the relationships concerning his music. Throughout today, he has been filming messages for Snapchat around Austin. After the Spotify House show,



he heads to see Julie Adenuga from Zane Lowe’s radio station Beats 1. Adenuga gives him a handheld microphone to record some bits for them. He has some time to kill before his next show and these things give him another output, he says, which is good when “you worry as much as I do.”

It’s 11pm and Garratt is sitting backstage at the Hype Hotel. The venue usually hosts corporate events and weddings but, like most buildings in Austin during SXSW, it’s been turned into a temporary music venue. Garratt isn’t onstage until midnight and is keeping a low profile in the shared dressing room until then. He watches Spanish scuzz-rockers Hinds do interviews with the camera crew that’s following them round. He says being on his own on tour “fucking sucks but I chose to do it.” He enjoys the camaraderie you get from bands being lumped together at festivals. When he performed at Mumford & Sons’ *Gentlemen Of The Road* event, he liked that all the dressing rooms faced inward into a communal hang-out area. “The Foo Fighters had their own jam room set up so when they were jamming and rehearsing for three hours before their show, everyone was watching. It was like a private Foo Fighters gig.”

As he takes to the stage, *Breaking Bad* star Aaron Paul arrives to watch. Paul heard Garratt’s music through a mutual friend and regularly comes to his gigs. Afterwards, Garratt jokes that, “I have a restraining order against him but it doesn’t do anything.” The pair have become good friends and Garratt has finally started watching *Breaking Bad* to see what all the fuss is about (“I don’t know if anybody’s told him, but it’s really good!”). There isn’t time in Garratt’s schedule to go out partying tonight: tomorrow will be spent filming an MTV live special with LA soul star Anderson .Paak and, besides, there is always something going on that Captain Jack needs to oversee. “Everyone is on the same level in my team,” he’d said earlier. “The minute I meet someone who I feel expects me to work for them, I’ll cut them out.” Jack Garratt ripped it up and started again and now he’s running things his way. You could be in his team, but whatever you do, don’t mention the beard. 🍷



**"I THOUGHT IT WAS
SUCH A BIG MISTAKE
TO FIRE ME FROM THE
VELVET UNDERGROUND."**

**"No, I don't shave
my legs actually."
For Welsh wonder
John Cale, it's
always summer.**

My 10 Commandments

JOHN CALE

The former Velvet Underground man offers up his golden rules for living.

1

COMMUNICATION IS ESSENTIAL FOR YOUR SOUL

Improvising music has been a real lifesaver for me. From not learning English until I was seven [*Cale grew up speaking Welsh*], to going to America... improvising was the way I communicated. You may not be able to order a cup of tea with music, but you'll make a friend, and then maybe they'll offer you one.

2

FIGURE OUT WHO'S RUNNING THE SHOW

I worked as an exec at a label [*Warners*] for three years in the '70s. I really learnt how corporations work and why you need to figure out who's in charge, because that's the guy you're going to eventually answer to. Then one day I decided it wasn't for me. It was comfortable getting a pay cheque, but I really wanted to be onstage.

3

FIND THE RIGHT VEHICLE

You have to pair up with the right people. I produced Happy Mondays' first LP because of [*Factory records boss*] Tony Wilson. He was probably the most dangerous man in England. He read the local news on TV and had his own record label – so subversive! I didn't know who the Mondays were, but I said, "Yeah" because he asked. They were fun!

4

STICK TO YOUR PRINCIPLES

Those early Velvet Underground shows were down to pure determination. Imagine: viola, bass, guitar and two voices going in three guitar-amplifiers and what kind of noise that was! It was horrendous, but you keep going. Just follow your principles and eventually it works.

5

MISTAKES ARE USEFUL

You have to let artists do as much as they can because you want as much of them on the vinyl as possible. That's what I did when I produced Patti Smith [*1975 debut Horses*]

6

SILENCE SHOULD SET ALARM BELLS RINGING

When I was fired from The Velvet Underground I thought: "Well, I should have seen that coming!" We'd been doing shows where we didn't talk to each other and in the studio we had a room each. We were four people who couldn't be around each other any more. I thought it was such a big mistake to fire me but between the touring, the drugs, the management and all the other activities, ultimately Lou didn't want to keep the band together. So be it.

7

WORK IS MUCH MORE FUN THAN FUN

When I left The Velvet Underground it made me very determined to

do my own thing. I went off and produced [*1968's*] The Marble Index for Nico and then Iggy. I was really determined to make it work because ultimately work is more fun than fun.

8

IGNORE THE RULES

Whatever you're doing, try it differently – put a right-handed cup in your left hand, whatever. If you've got a song and the guitar is playing a particular line, give it to another instrument. Throw the rules out the window.

9

REVISIT YOUR PAST BUT DON'T REPEAT IT

I love going back to old songs but changing them around. Yes, I could do them really well but it's much more interesting figuring something else out – "Instead of Nico, let's get a choir!" I learn so much about the material, particularly when you do it with different musicians. It's a good source for ideas.

10

STOP TRYING TO MAKE A KILLING AND MAKE A LIVING

When I was at the label I thought I knew about songs and I knew campaigns so I thought I'd write the song about *this*, hook up with *that*, and it would all work out. Then one of the promotion guys gave me this advice, "Stop trying to make a killing and make a living" and it made sense. Take care of the basics, you can't always depend on grand ideas. ☐

THOU SHALT COVET THESE FIVE ALBUMS

ERYKAH BADU But You Caint Use My Phone

"It's a new mixtape and the track with André 3000, Hello, is something amazing!"

MILES DAVIS Kind Of Blue

"My first tangle with jazz improvisation when I was trying to figure out what that was all about."

MICHAEL RABIN Paganini:

Caprices Op 1
"He was brilliant and died too young [*at 35*]. A reminder to go out and have fun too."



KOKANE Back 2 Tha Clap

"It's a hip-hop record with a wicked sense of humour and really good grooves."

JOHN CALE Sun Blindness Music

"One of my own? Oh, it was just some avant-garde pieces that I did around the time The Velvet Underground formed."



"They were fun!"
Cale produced the Mondays' first LP.

IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES...



...but in so many ways, it was also the worst. On the 20th anniversary of **Everything Must Go**, **John Harris** talks to James Dean Bradfield, Nicky Wire and Sean Moore to hear how the trio built **Manic Street Preachers'** greatest triumph from the depths of their despair over missing comrade Richey Edwards. >>

(PHOTOGRAPHS: ALEX LAKE)

MANIC STREET
PREACHERS
EVERYTHING
MUST GO

MANIC STREET PREACHERS
EVERYTHING MUST GO



Preacher comforts:
the Manics (from left,
James Dean Bradfield,
Nicky Wire, Sean Moore)
with 1996 breakthrough
album Everything Must
Go, Faster Studios,
Cardiff, 10 March 2016.

IN JANUARY 1991, MANIC STREET PREACHERS

appeared on a BBC2 show titled Snub TV, a weekly half-hour digest of the latest news from indie-land that worked as a kind of televisual version of the weekly music press. They shared that week's 30 minutes with grunge pioneers Dinosaur Jr, as well as such long-lost sensations as Spirea X, the Darkside and – calm down at the back, please – Frontline Assembly.

The Manics' slot was simple enough: footage of them miming to their new single Motown Junk – and interview clips, in which their guitarist and Minister of Propaganda Richey Edwards made most of the running, issuing his customary head-turning statements: "Youth is just the ultimate product", "We just want to mix politics and sex", "We're the most original band of the last 15 years".

Standing just behind Edwards, the Manics' bassist and co-lyric writer Nicky Wire had one contribution of his own, dispensed with all the certainty of youth: "We will never write a love song, ever. Full stop."

Around four years later, as the Manics prepared to work up material for their fourth album and rehearse for an American tour,

Wire presented guitarist James Dean Bradfield with the lyrics for a new song titled Further Away.

He wrote them in late 1994, while the Manics were on a grim tour of Europe with Suede. Wire had married his wife Rachel in September 1993, and while pinballing around Italy, Spain, France and Scandinavia and staying in cut-price Ibis hotels, he had been missing her like mad, as his words straightforwardly announced: "The further away I get from you/The harder it gets for everyone else... The happier I am when I'm with you/The harder it gets when I am alone."

"I remember Nick giving me that lyric," says Bradfield now, "and me going, 'Wow – I'm going to have to chase down that footage. Because you've gone and fucked yourself over, man: you've written a love song.'" In fact, the two of them did not exchange a single word about this sudden about-turn, and two decades later, they still haven't – but as the Manics have been diligently rehearsing Further Away for the run of summer shows at which they will celebrate their fourth album's 20th birthday and play it in its entirety, the significance of Further Away as

turning-point has been revealed once again.

"Playing it now, I've been thinking, 'This was the real start of something different: breaking the most hardcore rule we had,'" says Bradfield. "Maybe that was the real break from the past – just being more human about things. Not looking at this 10-point manifesto on the wall and saying, 'Yes sir, yes sir, yes sir.'"

Further Away was among a handful of songs the four Manics worked on in January 1995, when they gathered at a studio in rural Surrey called House In The Woods. Their last project had been The Holy Bible, that tangled treatise about failure, horror and dysfunction that had been released in August 1994, and encapsulated a phase of their history defined by the death from cancer in December 1993 of their mentor and co-manager Philip Hall (who was only 34) and Richey Edwards's mounting psychological problems. It had also won plenty of praise, although the band's financial position seemed more fragile than ever. "Off the back of The Holy Bible, we thought that was it," says drummer Sean Moore. "We were just waiting for the phone call saying the record company had finally let us go." It subsequently transpired that this dread turn of events had come dangerously close: around this time, the top brass at Sony Music had indeed suggested dropping the Manics, but they had been saved by the casting vote of their A&R man, Rob Stringer.

"Everything was just sounding simpler at that point, really," says Wire. "When I listen to Further Away, it just sounds like a great Oasis track, really, doesn't it? And there's no shame in that at all." While in Surrey, the band also worked on No Surface All Feeling, Kevin Carter, Small Black Flowers That Grow In The Sky and Elvis Impersonator: Blackpool Pier, and put various demo versions of those songs to tape.

Soon after, Bradfield and Richey Edwards drove to London, and the two of them listened to what had been recorded on the in-car stereo. They were on their way to the Embassy Hotel on Bayswater Road, and from there on to a promotional trip in America that would blur into a proper US tour. In



Good times: with mentor/co-manager Philip Hall (second right) Paris, March 1991.

Storm approaching:
the Manics, with Richey
Edwards (right), Paris,
November '94 – two months
before he disappeared.

MANIC STREET
PREACHERS
EVERYTHING
MUST GO



**"IF RICHEY EVER HAD ANY DOUBTS,
THEN FUCKING HELL, HE GOT IT
WRONG, DIDN'T HE? THE BALANCE
BETWEEN NICK'S WORDS AND
RICHEY'S WORDS MAKE IT WORK. IT'S
BRILLIANT." JAMES DEAN BRADFIELD**

Bradfield's telling, as they pulled into the hotel's underground car park, he asked Edwards what he thought of the new music. "I said, 'Which one's your favourite?' And he said, 'The others are OK, but Small Black Flowers... is the one I really like.' With a shrug of the shoulders, he was a bit ambivalent about No Surface All Feeling; he was a bit ambivalent about Further Away. But he was nailed on to his affection for Small Black Flowers... straight away."

»



MANIC STREET
PREACHERS
EVERYTHING
MUST GO

Enola / Alone.

The Statue of Liberty looks so solemn on the tv
100% risk of stepping outside
Every second too precious to try

My heart aches for enola
From my birth a relik a killer
But all I want to do is live
No matter how miserable it is

Please sing to me a song enola/alone
Please take me on home enola/alone

I walk in the grass and I feel some peace at last
I walk on the beach and for once I feel some ease

I'll take a picture of you
To remember how good you looked
Like memory it has disappeared
Naked and lonely with my fears

Please sing to me a song enola/alone
Please take me on home enola/alone

Please, please sing to me a song enola/alone
Please take me on home enola/alone

Word up: Nicky Wire
with the lyrics for
Everything Must Go
track Enola/Alone.

In Los Angeles for an in-store promo gig, September 1996.



“THAT MOMENT WHEN YOU BECOME THE BIGGEST CULT BAND IN BRITAIN, AND THEN YOU GO OVERGROUND – I THINK A BAND THAT DOESN’T EXPERIENCE THAT MISSES OUT.” NICKY WIRE

At 21 years’ distance, Bradfield looks back on that conversation, and recalls what he says is an “inkling... a feeling”, about Edwards’s possible sense of increasing creative distance from the other three. By this point, Edwards had suggested that the Manics’ next album might somehow approximate a mixture of the US heavy metal band Pantera and Primal Scream’s *Screamadelica*, as well as handing over a collection of characteristically unflinching lyrics, most of which the band would not work on for another 14 years. Though they still worked on each other’s lyrics, whereas he and Wire had once been close collaborators, they were now coming up with their words separately, and the *House In The Woods* songs suggested that the two of them were now sounding very different voices.

Bradfield talks about this in slightly fractured sentences that highlight the delicacy and uncertainty of what might or might not have been in Edwards’s mind. “Any process that Richey might have been going through, of thinking, ‘I can’t live this life’ or, ‘I can’t connect to anybody or anything in the world’ or, ‘I can’t do this’ or, ‘I can’t do that’... If he’d had the internal dialogue of whether him and Nick had become slightly separated as lyricists, if he’d had any doubts that they could co-habit on the same record... *If*. He never said this out loud... I’m really doing guesswork here.... I’m taking the inference that he would have been thinking, ‘I’m kind of going this way – how can I make that fit in with the boys?’ He never said that sentence,

but I’d been round him enough to perhaps know that might have been in him, a tiny bit.”

Then comes his conclusion. “But if he ever had any doubts, then fucking hell, he got it wrong, didn’t he? Because if you look at *Everything Must Go*, the balance between Nick’s words and Richey’s words make it work. It’s brilliant in that sense.”

Bradfield, Wire and Moore have arranged to meet Q at *Faster*, the band headquarters hidden away on a Cardiff backstreet. Upstairs, a TV blares out the latest news from the American presidential primaries; in the ground-floor bandroom, a mess of guitars, drums and wires attests to ongoing rehearsals for the *Everything Must Go* gigs, which will peak with a stadium show in Swansea on 28 May.

In turn, Wire, Bradfield and Moore take a seat in a darkened studio control room to recount their memories of *Everything Must*

Go’s story. Everything they say is informed by ambivalences, tensions and qualifications – not least when it comes to Edwards’s role in what they created. Everything *Must Go* was the first “Mk II” Manics album in that they recorded it as a three-piece and then had the bittersweet experience of its huge success without Edwards. But work on it began while he was around, half its songs feature his lyrics, and some of the album’s most affecting moments – most notably, *Enola/Alone* and *Australia* – are defined by their raw feelings about his absence.

The morning after he and Bradfield checked into the Embassy Hotel – 1 February, 1995, to be exact – Edwards went missing, and thus began a phase of the Manics’ story that was both uneventful, and unimaginably awful. Wire stayed at home in Newport, “just painting, walking up the mountain with my dog... I did a vague bit of cooking, which I was truly awful at. And I played a bit of golf.” Moore bought a new house in the suburbs of Bristol, and busied himself doing up its attic. Bradfield, meanwhile, was in London, »

Motorcar emptiness: Manics mystery still unsolved



RICHEY EDWARDS has been missing for a month, the only clue to his whereabouts is his abandoned car near the Severn Bridge. **ANDY BRADFIELD** looks for clues in the hope of solving the mystery tonight.

THE MANIC STREET PREACHERS' RICHIE EDWARDS has been missing for a month. The only clue to his whereabouts is his abandoned car near the Severn Bridge. **ANDY BRADFIELD** looks for clues in the hope of solving the mystery tonight.

From despair to where: (left and below) Richey Edwards's disappearance makes the papers; (bottom) Bradfield and Edwards in Paris, November '94.

MISSING



Richard Edwards
Carroll

locked into the same awful predicament as his two friends and colleagues. "The first month post-Richey, you still think something's going to happen," he says. "The second month, you're still thinking, 'We'll get there, we'll find him.' The third month, you start realising that it's the hope that kills you, kind of thing."

He was also conscious that with Britpop in full effect, his contemporaries were piling into the charts, and he could only watch from the margins:

"Jealous" is his one-word encapsulation of how he felt about what was afoot. When he watched Oasis's triumphant Top Of The Pops appearance on the occasion that Some Might Say went to Number 1 in April 1995, he says he instantly left his house in Shepherd's Bush, and set out on a long, solitary walk to Marble Arch and back: "I just had to get up, and get out of that room, and just not be near anybody."

"That was beside all the personal stuff, beside losing a friend," he continues. "You've lost a friend, someone you can go out for a drink with... and you're embarrassed to meet his parents, because whatever you're feeling, [they] can times it by 20. But on the other side, I was also fucking really, really confused and jealous and disappointed that we'd lost the focal point of the band. I was like, 'This isn't fair.'"

Back in Newport, Wire was trying to write, but he found himself repeatedly coming up with "shit phrases – a lot of shit lyrics, really." Bradfield would sporadically pick up a guitar and come up with "awful stuff: just terrible, terrible riffing." Meanwhile, Moore – Bradfield's co-tunesmith, who has always been much more than just the band's drummer – shut himself off from music altogether. "I didn't even listen to anything," he says. "Nothing. I just wanted to completely break from it."

By the late summer, though, Wire had come up with two potential sets of lyrics,



spread over 20 A4 pages, that suggested some kind of breakthrough. One was titled The Pure Motive, inspired by two episodes of the TV drama Cracker, in which Robert Carlyle played a character set on murderously avenging the 96 people killed in the Hillsborough Disaster (a theme that would resurface on the 1998 Manics song S.Y.M.M.); the other, A Design For Life, was a piece of what he calls "social history", opening with the head-turning line, "Libraries gave us power".

Wire sent them in the post to Bradfield, and the latter straight away surmised that in eloquently exploring the fate of the British working class, the two sets of words were expressions of the same thing. He took the best bits of each, and put them to music he played to Wire at 150 miles' distance. "James literally phoned me up and played it to me, on a guitar," says Wire. "And before he played it, he said, 'It's a bit of R.E.M., a bit of Ennio Morricone, with Phil Spector's sheen.' And I could tell down the phone: straight away, it was, 'Woahh'."

Wire, Moore and Bradfield then tentatively arranged to meet at Soundspace, a rehearsal studio in Cardiff. In Bradfield's recollection, once Moore had insisted on the song's time signature – 6/8, to use the correct terminology – everything fell into place; Moore says the essentials were all in place inside 10 minutes. "After one verse, I remember realising that he was right, and getting swept along. I was just like, 'Fuck – this is brilliant,'" says Bradfield. "It was exciting. It really was. I'd had it in my head for two weeks, I had it in my head on the train all the way down, trying to visualise the moment like a pathetic sportsman." He tells the next part of the story in the matter of a footballer recounting the perfect goal: "I've stood in front of Sean, he's done this – it's right. It's going to be amazing. I know this song is kind of going to save us."

The next people to hear A Design For Life were the band's manager Martin Hall (the brother of the aforementioned Philip), Rob Stringer and the producer Mike Hedges. Thanks to his work with such bands as The Cure and Siouxsie And The Banshees, the latter had long been on a list Bradfield kept of his 10 favourite producers, and had been approached to helm The Holy Bible; when he found out that Hedges had produced David McAlmont and Bernard Butler's 1995 hit Yes, released in May 1995, Bradfield was reminded of why. "That's a great record," he says. "And I was like, 'Fuck me – Mike Hedges produced it.' It was, 'Right – let's get him.'"

"Yes was probably the first thing I listened to that summer," says Sean Moore. "It was



MANIC STREET
PREACHERS
EVERYTHING
MUST GO

James Dean Bradfield:
“I was confused, jealous and
disappointed that we’d lost
the focal point of the band...”

**“THE FIRST MONTH POST-RICHEY,
YOU THINK SOMETHING’S GOING TO
HAPPEN. THE SECOND, YOU’RE STILL
THINKING, ‘WE’LL GET THERE’. THE
THIRD, YOU REALISE IT’S THE HOPE THAT
KILLS YOU.” JAMES DEAN BRADFELD**

just so uplifting. And then everything seemed to fall into place.”

In September 1994, the Manics duly arrived at Chateau de la Rouge Motte, the studio and country house that Hedges – who Moore describes as “a leviathan of a man” – owned in rural Normandy. When they arrived, he was waving to them from the front door, having doused the fingers of one hand in calvados, and set them alight.

“I absolutely loved it, because it was





Flying the flag at the Smash Hits Poll Winners' Party, 1996; (right) the Manics recorded a song for the '95 War Child charity album *Help*; (below) *A Design For Life*, which went to Number 2 in the charts.

exactly what I needed," says Bradfield. "We'd never sold a fucking record in France, no one knew us there, I didn't have a mobile phone yet, I wasn't worried about buying the NME or the Melody Maker every fucking week, or Select Magazine – I wasn't worried about any of that. I wasn't worried about somebody wanting to talk about Richey, or somebody saying they'd seen him... to actually be insulated from all of that was just fucking brilliant."

"It had this Addams Family-esque look to it," says Moore. "We were out of the country. We were out of contact."

"It was just really dark and lovely," offers Wire. "Sometimes things would break down in that studio, and Mike would just look at you and say, 'Everything's alright.' And you just believed him. He never, ever panicked, ever. And he was quite loose as well: it's not a supremely tight album. He was funny, and lovely, and we just got loads done. I'd get the NME faxed, page by page [laughs]. And that was it."

In the nearby village of Domfront (population: 3900), Bradfield remembers nightly drinking with Hedges in the village's two bars, one of which had the inelegant name of Le Happy Hour. "I think it was a bit of a divorcees pick-up joint for the outlying farming community," he says.

Wire, by contrast, loved the local stationery shop. He and Moore also immersed themselves in their first extended experience of Sky Sports, and in particular, its coverage of the Ryder Cup. "And we all drank tons of wine," he says. "Just shitloads. I put on about two fucking stone there. Just drinking so much. But not

to get pissed. Just... French."

Among the first songs they recorded was a cover of Raindrops Keep Fallin' On My Head, done in a day for the War Child charity album *Help*. As well as the material they had worked on at House In The Woods, Edwards's lyrics were used on Removables and The Girl Who Wanted To Be God – both taken by Bradfield from the lyrics later used on 2009's *Journal For Plague Lovers*.

Enola/Alone, Wire says, came to include two lines that captured his essential state of mind after all the band's travails: "But all I want to do is live/No matter how miserable it is." And *Further Away* eventually featured a

Bradfield vocal done the morning after an endless session at Le Happy Hour: "Bizarrely, because I was so drunk, I was so free, and my voice was so clear... I don't know why. I was *numb*. And Mike pressed the talkback and said, 'That was very sensitive – you're done.'"

While all this was going on, Wire worked on successive drafts of the song that would give the album its title, taken from a play written by his brother, the poet and writer Patrick Jones. Everything *Must Go* was a pretty direct statement that this was a new phase of the Manics' history, and they had to leave behind the more pain-wracked elements of their recent history. He now translates it thus: "You just can't expect us to go through that pain any more. We just can't be that band, cos we'd be shit at it."

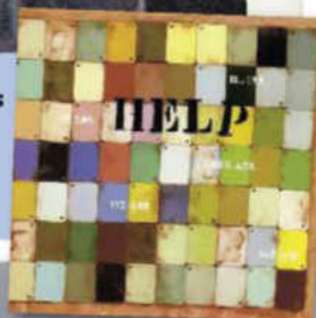
After the first tranche of work in France, there was a bizarre episode indeed: a solitary live date, supporting The Stone Roses at Wembley Arena, two days

before New Year's Eve 1995. "We just wanted to creep in under the radar of someone else's greatness. Just to get our feet back onstage," says Bradfield; as far as Moore recalls, it was a matter of "let's try out *A Design For Life* and see what it sounds like – maybe the first and last time in a big room, pretending to be a big band."

As well as working with Hedges, the Manics also tried recording two songs – The Girl Who Wanted To Be God and Australia – with Stephen Hague, the producer who had recently worked on New Order's album, *Republic*. This ill-fated part of the story played out at Real World Studios, near Bath. "It made us realise that we hadn't really changed, cos there were communal dinners, with other bands," says Wire. "We just thought, 'We can't do that.' So they put our table under the stairs [laughs]. [West Country rock quartet] Reef were in."

"It was terrible, on every level. I can remember it vividly. I felt ill. And everything was fucking... *falafel*. Everything came with coriander. Or dill. I fucking despise dill."

A Design For Life was released on 15 April, 1996. In its first week, it sold 92,648 copies: in the mid-week charts, it briefly sat at Number 1, before it was overtaken by



The Brits '97, where the Manics bagged two awards.



Sean Moore:
“Everything
seemed to fall
into place...”

Mark Morrison's *Return Of The Mack*. News of its success, says Sean Moore, sparked a mess of feelings: “Relief, vindication – and there was the bizarreness of a song in 6/8 time, with a lyric about libraries. So there was a strange humour in it.” There was also a sense of the Manics purposely reining themselves in: purposely blank artwork, anonymous-long casualwear, and a newly quiet Nicky Wire – who finally emerged from onstage purdah at the end of 1996, when he stepped from the shadows at Cardiff International Arena and calmly announced: “If any of you own an Ocean Colour Scene record, you can fuck off now.”

Early the following year, the Manics enjoyed the obligatory triumphant evening at the Brit Awards. “That moment when you become the biggest cult band in Britain, and then you go overground – I think a band that doesn’t experience that misses out,” says Wire. “And

“WE’VE WON FOUR BRIT AWARDS. WE’VE WON IVOR NOVELLOS, BUT PEOPLE FORGET SO QUICKLY THESE DAYS.” SEAN MOORE

it was still happy then. There was no, ‘Oh my God, we’ve got too big.’ That did come later. But we were just gliding. *Gliding*. The only ambivalence was that Richey wasn’t there, cos he would have looked, and sounded, and been amazing.”

For Bradfield, “everything was topped by bittersweetness. It came crashing down the morning that *A Design For Life* was Number 2. I remember thinking, ‘Fuck – this is bittersweet. And it’s going to be like this for a long time. The rest of this album’s going to be like this. And something tumultuous and earth-shattering might happen in the midst of it all. But if it doesn’t, everything’s going to be bittersweet anyway, so just man up and get on with it.’”

Such has been the basis of 20 more years of Manics history, leading up to the fact that having been together for the best part of 30 years, they are about to play *Everything Must Go* at a stadium, as much as anything to remind people of their singular achievements. “We’ve won four Brit Awards,” says Moore. “We’ve won Ivor Novellos, but people forget so quickly these days.”

There is one last twist to this story, centered on the long-overlooked song that quietly began the *Everything Must Go* era, and became the album’s penultimate track. *Further Away* was the first and last Manics song of its kind: they have not written a love song since. 📺



TRACKS OF MY YEARS

JESS GLYNNE

The North London dance-pop diva on the songs that soundtracked her life – from soppy love ballads to “piss-taking” rap and house-party bangers.

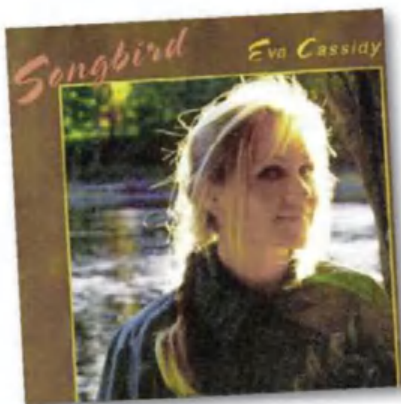
Queen of soul, Aretha Franklin, 1969 – the source of fond memories for Jess.



1 MY SOUL MUSIC AWAKENING

I SAY A LITTLE PRAYER,
ARETHA FRANKLIN (1968)

“I must’ve been about five years old when I first heard this. My parents had the Aretha Now LP and as soon as I heard this song I became obsessed with it – it’s one of my earliest soul music moments. I used to sing it everywhere I went. I love the melody, it gives you such an uplifting feeling. And it works on so many levels: it’s really soulful and powerful but I also remember really connecting with the lyrics. It brings back a lot of fond memories of sitting in the front room at home and blasting out Aretha and singing it with my family.”



2 STARTING ON A JOURNEY OVER THE RAINBOW, EVA CASSIDY (1992)
 “Eva Cassidy had such a sweet and innocent voice. I love this song and I became obsessed with the whole Songbird LP, which again I found in my parents’ record collection. When I first heard it, when I was about 10, it just sounded so different to me. I think my taste in music at that age was quite diverse compared to my friends. They were listening to Spice Girls and Craig David, and as much as I was listening to that as well, I was also into things like this. The tone of her voice, it’s so warm and powerful and very real, unlike a lot of meaningless pop from that time. Her songs tell you a story and take you on a journey.”

3 COMING INTO MY OWN HERO, MARIAH CAREY (1993)
 “An end-of-primary-school obsession. Mariah Carey’s #1’s album was my thing. But this song in particular was really big for me as I started to develop a love for the music that I was buying, rather than listening to my parents’ music. This was when I realised this was what I wanted to do. I really love slow ballads like this and Whitney Houston’s I Will Always Love You. I used to have this tape recorder that I borrowed or stole off my friend and I used to record myself singing this song on it. I wonder where those tapes are now? Probably in a bin somewhere [laughs]!”

Holding out for a Hero: Mariah Carey was “really big” for Glynne.



Amy Winehouse: “sang such cool, quirky songs.”

4 KEEPING IT REAL FUCK ME PUMPS, AMY WHITEHOUSE (2003)

“This would be in my early teens when my parents brought home her Frank LP after a gig they went to. I was obsessed with this north London Jewish girl who was singing such cool, quirky songs – this sort of weird jazz, but with a little bit of rap in there too. She was into Q-Tip and Mos Def and you could really hear that in her music. She was also a brilliant lyricist who loved writing about real-life experiences and that’s what is so fascinating to me. I saw the Amy documentary when it came out and found it really sad, but amazing too.”

5 LEARNING ABOUT LOVE SUPERSTAR, LAURYN HILL (1998)

“The Miseducation Of... LP was so inspiring for me. It taught me how to write songs about life rather than solely about love. I was young and had never been in love and yet I was dabbling in writing about love, even though I’d never been in love or properly understood it. After this, I wrote about real people who make a difference to my life.”



Kanye West: Jess knew he got soul!

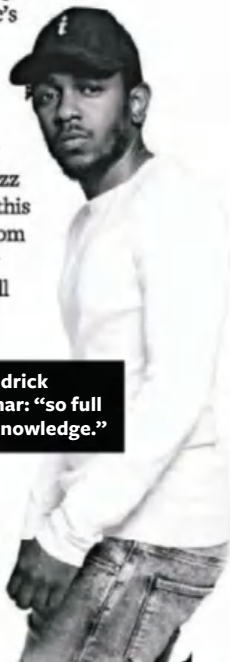
6 PARTYING HARD THROUGH THE WIRE, KANYE WEST (2003)

“This reminds me of house parties... [starts singing] “Through The Wire, ne-ne-ne...” Yeah, I used to love that! It was weird, the boys at school were really into this but there were very few girls who’d get an LP like The College Dropout. I got it and really loved the rapping because it had a soulful element and he always had such great beats. Eminem, too, was also a massive inspiration. I loved all the jokes and piss-taking lyrics and the way he talked about quite deep issues but in a comical way.”

7 AHEAD OF THE GAME i, KENDRICK LAMAR (2015)

“I absolutely love Kendrick’s voice, it’s so unique-sounding and he’s got so much to say and with so many incredible musical influences – it’s like listening to a Jay Z record mixed with a Sam Cooke record and with jazz thrown in. I can listen to this music endlessly in my room or on the go without ever getting bored. You can tell he’s really intelligent because his music is so full of knowledge and interesting life stories. I mean, the new Kendrick record [untitled unmastered] is amazing! He’s so far ahead of everything that nobody can keep up.”

Kendrick Lamar: “so full of knowledge.”



The Loneliness Of The Long-Distance Singer-Songwriter

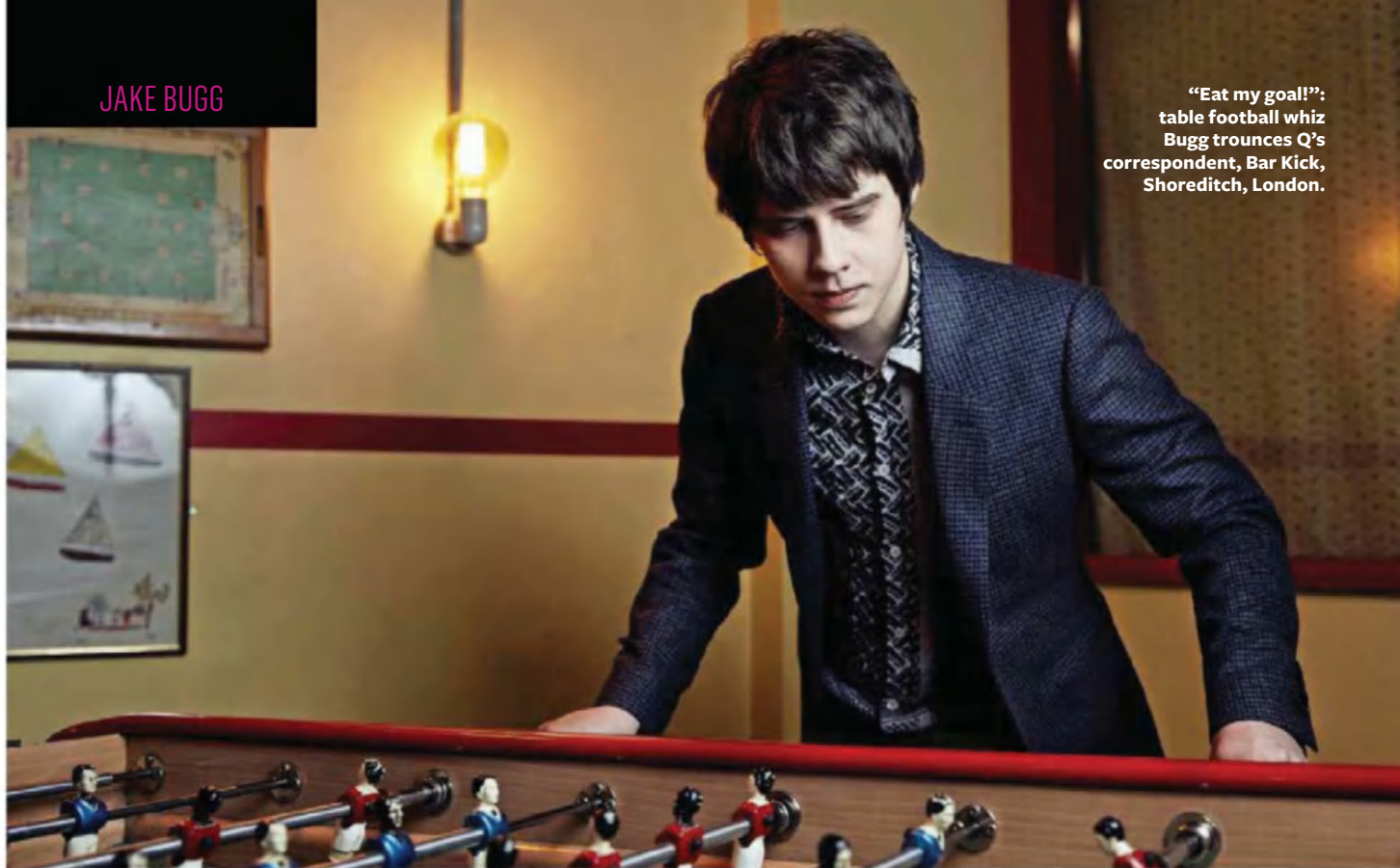
It's alright selling loads of records and recording with all of your idols, but sometimes the dislocation of being a 22-year-old living out of a suitcase is overwhelming. **Chris Catchpole** meets **Jake Bugg** to hear why he checks into a hotel even when he goes home to Nottingham just to feel normal.

Portraits: Tom Barnes



On his one: pop's most eligible bachelor treads a soulfully solitary path, Shoreditch, London, 7 March, 2016.

"I went out and bought teabags the other day and came back and realised I didn't have a kettle."



The home side are 4-2 down and looking rattled. As their team try and pull themselves back from the deficit, two central midfielders slowly pass the ball between each of them, nervously biding for time as the opposition twitch in anticipation. It's a risky move and one that quickly backfires. The pair lose control, the ball rolls into the path of an opposing striker who dinks it forward towards the keeper. The unsuspecting goalie panics and back-heels it firmly into his own net. "Own goal, mate!" crows Jake Bugg, leaning over a table football game in Shoreditch's table football-themed Bar Kick. Given the fact that the Nottingham singer-songwriter spent much of his youth playing county-level football and Q is frankly rubbish at anything that requires hand-eye co-ordination, challenging him to a quick game might not have been the smartest move. It's a small miracle we walk away losing just six goals to four.

The temptation to ask for a best-of-three is strong, but tonight Jake Bugg has other matters to attend to. This week he plays four small gigs across London for which all the tickets sold out in minutes. It's a chance not only to showcase material from his forthcoming third album, *On My One*, but also to let fans see him at the sort of venues the 22-year-old outgrew around the time he could legally buy a pint.

Back in 2012, Jacob Edwin Kennedy Bugg cut an unlikely figure as a pop star. Skulking into the public consciousness as a spiffy-happy 18-year-old in a tracksuit, he sang rattling skiffle-pop about life on Nottingham's notorious Clifton council estate like a Lee Majors for the ASBO generation. With Noel Gallagher and Johnny Marr coming out as fans, hordes of teenagers who had supposedly turned their back on rock'n'roll acts for the pleasures of chart pop, grime and hip-hop, sent his self-titled debut straight to Number 1, making him the youngest ever UK solo male artist to top the album charts. Its Rick Rubin-produced follow-up, *Shangri La*, finessed the retro formula in 2013, landing in the Top 3 here and making him a star in America.

Given such trad-rock leanings and Bugg's habit of talking up the likes of Don McLean and The Everly Brothers in interviews, it came as some surprise to hear *On My One*'s first official single, Gimme The Love, the week before we meet. A machine-gun attack of motor-

mouthed rhymes delivered over thundering breakbeats and stuttering wah-wah guitar, it was a bit like discovering Jack White had made a record with Tiësto.

"I wanted it to be like, 'What the fuck is this?!'" notes Bugg with a chuckle, fiddling with a lighter as he people-watches from Bar Kick's front window. "[*Johnny Cash-like teaser track*] On My One came out a week before that and people were like, 'Oh, it just sounds like his other stuff.' So when *that* came out..."



NIGHT ONE

On the road again: kicking off a week of London promo gigs, Village Underground, Shoreditch, 7 March, 2016.

"Mike D still hasn't sent the tune we were working on back. I wouldn't mind but it was called Waiting. It's taking the piss."

ANDREW COTTELL,
OLIVER HALFIN, TOM BARNES

If Gimme The Love shook expectations, then Bugg's forthcoming album looks set to confound them even further. A wildly and at times perplexingly eclectic collection, the experience is not dissimilar to listening to a Neil Young-loving parent fighting over the car stereo with their teenage child. Half the songs continue to plough a dusty folk-and-blues furrow, while others throw in angsty electro-pop (Bitter Salt), smooth R&B

(Never Wanna Dance) and '80s power balladry (Love, Hope And Misery). One song, Ain't No Rhyme, sees him delivering an actual rap.

"I don't want to stick to one sound because that would be boring," shrugs Bugg matter-of-factly. "I've always liked all kinds of music. I do like my hip-hop. On the way here I was thinking about getting a remix done – I've been listening to those old Ibiza classic sounds. My mate likes his house so he's been taking me around DJ nights. It's not like I'm dancing or anything. I'm sat in the corner nodding me head. Listening while getting smashed at the same time."

Hip-hop, remixes, Ibiza, house nights... it's hard to square all that with the image of a mop-haired acoustic guitar slinger who recorded at Sun Studios, and headlined Nashville's country music Mecca, the Ryman Auditorium. As it transpires though, Jake Bugg is a more interesting collision of surprises and contradictions than you might think. One minute he'll be talking about the "session cats" he played with at Rick Rubin's Malibu studio, the next he'll be discussing the rise of UK grime and enthusing about Brooklyn rapper Joey Bada\$. On the one hand he bemoans how music has taken a back seat to fashion and image in the pop charts, yet he's just signed to the Elite modelling agency and recently played at a Burberry fashion show. While he used to frequently take a pop at "X Factor shit", when trying



With fan and occasional critic, Noel Gallagher.

to break through in the US he reluctantly realised he would have to accept the offer of performing on its sister show, American Idol. "It was just how I thought it would be, a cruel and horrible thing," he recalls with a dry laugh, "but you know, after we played, the song went into the Shazam Top 10. There are things you might not want to do but they are beneficial in the long run. You have to compromise all the time."

With his drooping eyelids and a ghostly pallor suggestive of someone who might take a turn for the worse unless you run down to the all-night garage to pick them up a Mars drink and packet of Monster Munch, Bugg seems unfazed by his rise to fame. He recalls hanging out with Mick Jagger four years ago in the same manner you'd describe bumping into your mate's dad down the pub. "He was lovely. But at the same time you realise he's also just human. It's like, '[Drops into hiccupping Jagger voice] I'm just going to the toilet.' Alright, mate!"

It's an outward nonchalance that masks a remarkably savvy mind and a steely determination to succeed. Back when he was discovered playing pubs around his local estate, the younger Bugg was adamant that he wanted to sign to a major label. "People talk about [me] being manufactured or being commercial, but the one thing I needed to get my shit on the road was some money and they were able to offer me >>



NIGHT TWO

"Hope you like my new electro-pop, hip-hop, '80s power ballad, R&B direction": The Dome, Tufnell Park, London, 8 March, 2016.





NIGHT THREE

"Where are we now?": Bugg shows no signs of flagging as he plays another sold-out gig, Electric, Brixton, London, 10 March, 2016.



NOTTS WHAT YOU EXPECTED

A few of the Clifton troubadour's unlikely jams.

RUN THE JEWELS

JB: "It's different from a lot of your new rappers and your grime. It's trying something different, something new. I hadn't heard anything that was as raw but interesting at the same time."

that," he says. "I wanted it then, I didn't want to wait around." Having seen other local singers lose out for refusing to do the same he also made the decision to accept the stipulation to work with co-writers, in Bugg's case ex-Snow Patrol member Iain Archer and Crispin Hunt, formerly of Britpop nearly-men Longpigs.

While they undoubtedly added some spit and polish to his tunes about hiding from the police and drinking super-strength cider, the perceived lack of authenticity caused a backlash in some quarters. Not least from Noel Gallagher who described himself as "heartbroken" to discover that his new favourite singer had worked with professional songwriters. "It was a free education," Bugg states today, drawing the comparison with his mates going to college to learn various trades. "The truth of it is that most people don't really care, they just care if the song is good enough. People who hear it on the radio, they don't care. The young fans, they don't care. They just want to hear good songs."

Unlike his first two albums, *On My One* (Nottingham slang for being alone) is entirely written by Bugg. "Not so people would think, 'Oh, that's cool he's done it himself,'" he points out. "I wanted to prove to myself that I could do it." However, the album initially began as an unlikely collaboration between Bugg and former Beastie Boy Mike D, whom he'd met while recording *Shangri La*. "I wanted to try a few



know. They're so tight, great tunes, great choruses and grooving too."

THE DOOBIE BROTHERS

"I've been listening to a lot of that, they're pretty fucking sweet. Michael McDonald, you

VANGELIS

"I love stuff like Vangelis and Jean-Michel Jarre. Sometimes I'll get a keyboard out backstage and get little synth sounds up. They're modern classical composers. I don't know why I like it. Maybe because it helps you sleep!"

JUDAS PRIEST

"When I was growing up metal was pretty sweet because you just want to do those fast solos and they've got tunes as well. That first Judas Priest album [*Rocka Rolla*, right] is amazing. It doesn't matter what style it's done in if the songs are good. That's all I care about."



things out with a couple of producers. Nothing came of it but just to work with him was inspiring," he notes, blaming himself for not having the songs fully formed at that stage. "They still haven't sent back the tune we were working on. I wouldn't mind, but it was called *Waiting [laughs]*. It's fucking taking the piss."

The last time Jake Bugg played East London's 1000-capacity Village Underground he was supporting The Stone Roses at a special show to celebrate the 2012 Olympics. Where the mixing desk is tonight stood a special pen where athletes including Bradley Wiggins and Jessica Ennis nodded along as he strummed his latest single *Lightning Bolt*. In a stroke of serendipity, stadium DJs and sporting montage compilers blasted the track across the world every time record-breaking sprinter Usain "Lightning" Bolt won a race. Which as anyone with access to a TV that summer can recall, was quite often. "That was pretty sweet. I wasn't aware he was called *Lightning Bolt*," he notes with a laugh. "I had no idea, man."

Any gold medallists present are inconspicuous this evening as Bugg and his band ease their new songs into the clattering, *Mystery Train*-diverted-via-The East Midlands Line rockabilly of his older material. While the more "Jake Bugg-like" songs are obviously a more natural fit,



“Your own family look at you in a different light. They’re like fans and that can be difficult. If you haven’t got that, who do you go and speak to when you need to?”

NIGHT FOUR

Bring on the weekend! Bugg completes his week of concerts in salubrious surroundings, Bush Hall, Shepherd’s Bush, London, 11 March, 2016.



a ferocious version of Gimme The Love brings the gig to a rapturously received close. Backstage afterwards, Bugg’s changed out of his all-black stage gear into a green tracksuit. He reminisces about driving down from Nottingham to play here in 2012 and walking towards the dressing room hoping to meet his idols. “I could hear them having this massive row, I think it was Mani shouting: ‘You know what you are? A fucking buzz kill!’ The manager said, ‘Best not go in there, mate.’”

Given he has another show the following night at North London’s Tufnell Park Dome, Bugg opts for a carton of milk rather than a beer before heading home for a quick spliff, a game of FIFA and an early-ish night. An international pop star he might be, but in some respects Jake Bugg remains a typical 22-year-old.


Three days later, and despite the biting weather, a queue of teenage girls have been sat on the pavement outside West London’s Bush Hall for over three hours waiting to catch a glimpse of Bugg. Some have travelled across the country to be here, some have been to all four of Bugg’s gigs this week – including the previous night’s concert at the Electric in Brixton. Ask them if they’ve been enjoying the new material and they respond as if they’ve just been asked if they like ice-cream or sunshine. Bugg strolls up to the venue, signs autographs and poses for pictures

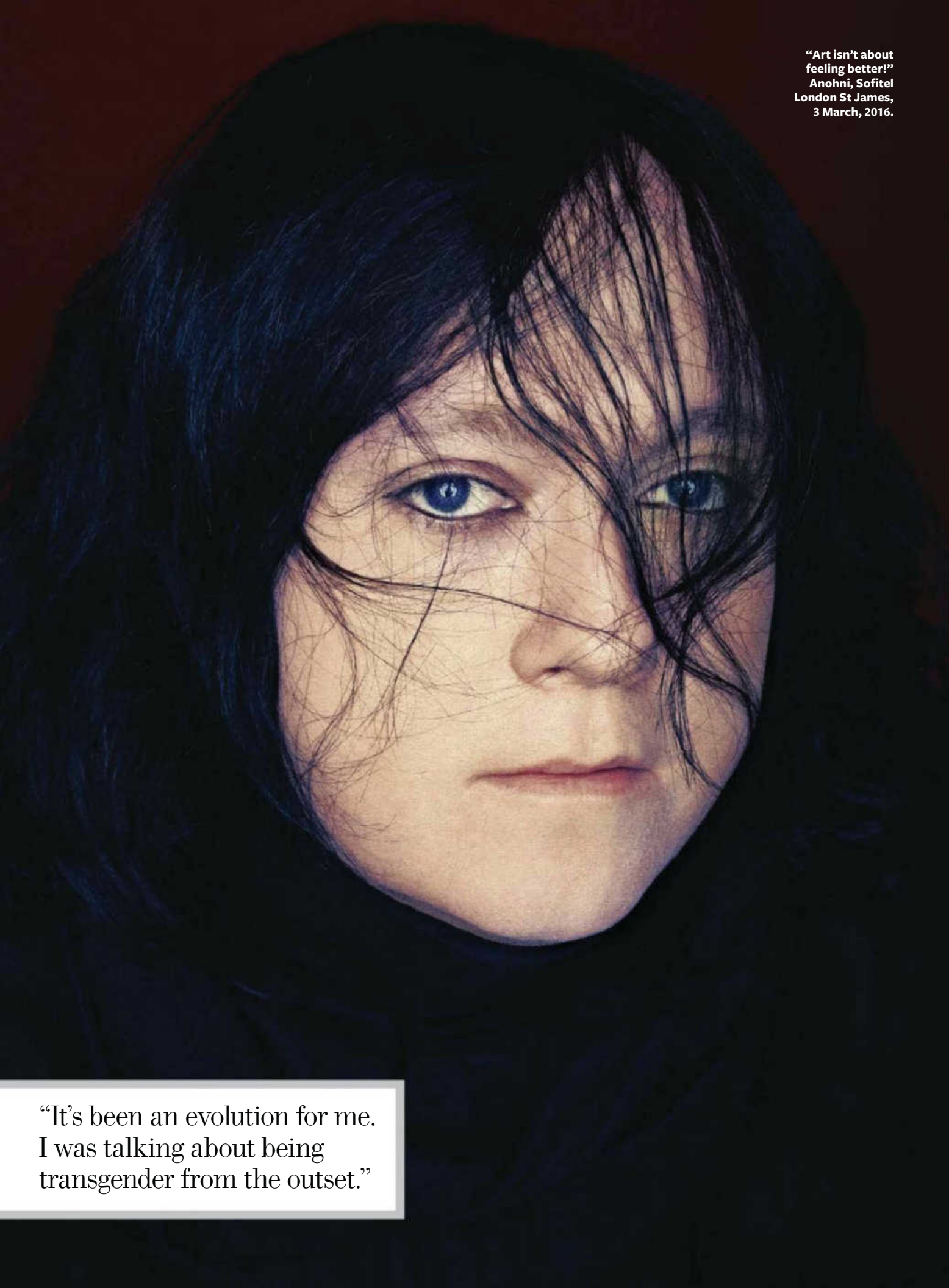
before ducking upstairs to the smoking terrace. The singer recently bought a flat in nearby Ladbroke Grove, it’s the first place he’s had to call home since leaving his mum’s council house at 18. “I went out and bought teabags the other day and came back and realised I didn’t have a kettle,” he recalls, shaking his head. “It’s little things like that.”

After four straight years on the road, Bugg has become so accustomed to living out of hotels that whenever he goes home to visit his family he’ll still check in to one. Even at Christmas. “It can be so insane when you go back, everyone wants to say hello and see how things are and you need to go and have some space,” he says, looking down at the floor. “I feel like because of what I do it sometimes makes me feel distant because they’re not treating me as a family member,

they’re treating me as ‘Jake the singer’. It’s weird, your own family look at you in a different light. They’re like fans and that can be difficult. If you haven’t got that, who do you go and speak to when you need to? It’s pretty tough, but at the same time people will go, ‘Well, you’re travelling around the world making loads of money...’ so you can’t complain because you just get all that shit.”

The image of a lonesome troubadour might be a romantic one but when you’re in your early 20s, travelling the world as a solo artist can be isolating. Bugg may take his old school mates on tour with him, but given his new LP’s recurring themes of loneliness and the difficulties of maintaining relationships while living such a transient life, it’s clearly something that plays on his mind. “Maybe it was subconscious that all the tracks veer on the side of loneliness,” he thinks. “I didn’t sit down and think, ‘Right, I’m going to write an album that makes me look [*puts on comedy sad voice*] really lonely.’” He bursts out laughing.

Fast-forward a few hours and Bugg certainly doesn’t appear miserable. Any first-night kinks in the set have been ironed out over the intervening days and he is visibly buzzing off a gig well played. Taking the party from his dressing room up the road to the K West hotel, he’s laughing with his crew, getting the drinks in and nipping out for fags with the regularity of Dot Cotton after a duty free spree. After a day to sleep off the hangover and maybe squeeze in another game of FIFA, he’s off on a tour of America before coming straight back to Europe for festival season. Whatever genre of music he decides to turn his hand to, maybe life on the road is simply where Jake Bugg feels most at home. Hopefully he will have bought himself a kettle by the time he eventually rolls back into town. 



**"Art isn't about
feeling better!"
Anohni, Sofitel
London St James,
3 March, 2016.**

"It's been an evolution for me.
I was talking about being
transgender from the outset."

PORTRAITS MATT HOLYOAK

ANOHNI

➔ **Anohni** has come a long way from her early days on New York's avant-garde scene, via a Mercury Music Prize win for *I Am A Bird Now* with Antony and the Johnsons in 2005 and on to her politically engaged recent work. It's a fascinating story, both personally and artistically, but that's the last thing the "terrified" star wants to talk about with **Dorian Lynskey**.

A

nohni started thinking of herself as Anohni over 15 years ago, around the time she began releasing music. It was a unique name that she pieced together

from different sources but it was a private name. To the public she was still Antony Hegarty and she used the male pronoun. It was as Antony that she made four albums with Antony and the Johnsons, won the Mercury Music Prize for 2005's *I Am A Bird Now*, curated the 2012 Meltdown festival, and collaborated with everyone from Björk to performance artist Marina Abramovic. But now, finally, she is Anohni to everybody.

"It's been an evolution for me," she says. "I was talking about being transgender from the outset but I felt I was asking too much, honestly, to ask that people honour me by

calling me she or using a more feminine name, because I had a lot of shame about it. That part of me is very British. When people would ask me, 'Why are you hiding behind make-up?' I'd say, 'No, actually I'm helping you to see me more clearly.' This, again, is to help people see more clearly."

Outwardly, little has changed: the gentle, moon-pale face framed by raven-black hair; the layered black clothes that give the effect of robes; the soft, earnest voice that seems to bear no relationship to her extraordinarily expressive singing. It's a good job we're sitting in the sedate tea room of a London hotel, because in a louder room she would be almost inaudible.

Anohni hasn't only changed her name and pronouns, though. Her new album *Hopelessness* is an audacious artistic transformation. She's previously dabbled in dance music and talked at length about political issues but *Hopelessness* combines

the two interests into an undeniably powerful protest record, recorded over three years with help from co-producers Hudson Mohawke and Oneohtrix Point Never. It's quite a leap.

"I got to the point where I wanted to make a record that reflected what I really thought," she says, stirring her tea. "I wanted to make songs that were really direct and clear and you didn't need an interview to tell you what they meant. If I'd done these songs as ballads it would probably have been a real yawn. I thought of [electronic music] like a Trojan horse. I wanted to have a conversation that was as broad as possible."

She knows it's a gamble. Even artists Anohni admires, like Kendrick Lamar and M.I.A., don't go so relentlessly for the political jugular. Do people want to hear a whole album of electronic pop songs about capitalism, drone warfare, surveillance and the end of life as we know it? She's about to find out.

"I have no idea what the ramifications will be," she says. "I know I was really scared when I was making the record. I was saying things that it felt like you're not supposed to say. And I got a lot of feedback like: 'You're not supposed to say that.' But that usually indicates that there's something interesting behind the door. I wanted to be expansive. I wanted to participate. Because life is short."

It quickly becomes clear that this is not your typical interview. If it were up to Anohni this article would be a two-hour conversation about the issues raised by Hopelessness. This would be entertaining for Q and Anohni but perhaps less so for the reader so, after 45 minutes, I try to move the conversation on to other stories.

"I think that is the story," she says.

Not the only one I need to write, though.

"It actually is the story we need to write," she insists. "We should use this space to talk about things that could make a difference."

I just think people are interested in your life as well as your ideas.

"I understand what you're getting at," she sighs. "If you don't want to do it that way it's fine, forget it." Her shoulders slump and her head sags, like the air's been let out of her.

Anohni says that her life story has been told too many times. "I find it very dull. You can Google it." By anyone else's standards, though, it is remarkable so let's give it a go.

Born in 1971, she was raised by an engineer father and photographer mother in Chichester, where she was a chorister. Although she's lived in America since she was 10, her accent remains impregnably English. "I'm an English citizen and an American citizen. I don't feel like I belong to any country but I have a right to belong to both."

As an artistic teenager, she responded to emotional, androgynous voices that reflected her own discomfort with traditional gender binaries: singers like Marc Almond, Alison Moyet, Boy George and Nina Simone, some of whom have since become friends. While living in California, Anohni was entranced by *Mondo New York*, a documentary about Manhattan performance artists. One of her college teachers, the gay film historian Vito Russo, encouraged her to witness the scene for herself. She applied to study experimental theatre at New York University and arrived in Manhattan in 1990 with a mission. Inspired by the cover of the Soft Cell single *Torch*, she shaved her head, donned a black slip, combat boots and make-up, and scrawled "Fuck off" on her forehead. She made quite an impression.



New York, we love you: (above, from left) Anohni, Laurie Anderson, Bette Midler, Jimmy Scott, Lou Reed and David Bowie, Carnegie Hall, New York, 2005; (right) starting out in the Big Apple, 1993.

"I was looking for something very specific that I'd been told was there," she says. "I had certain things I wanted to do, which I did pretty quickly. I had that single-mindedness which you tend to have in your early 20s. A kind of innocence in a way. As hardcore as it was, it was very innocent."

Anohni found a fertile artistic community of friends and mentors who schooled her in the Lower East Side's subcultural history. There were hardly any books written about the scene she was interested in, no Google or YouTube to help her, so she could only learn by speaking to people who were there in the '70s and '80s – those, at least, who hadn't been prematurely cut down by AIDS.

"It was a very confusing time to be a young adult from the queer world," she says. "It was an apocalyptic time for a large swathe of the community I was interested in." She compares it to 9/11. "The gay community had already experienced 9/11 15 years earlier. They'd experienced thousands of people dying in an exodus of spirits. There was a 'no future' kind of vibe. In the middle of a plague it's hard to imagine the end of a plague. It can



give you a reckless sense of abandon. What do you have to lose?"

With Johanna Constantine, an old friend from California, Anohni formed the Blacklips Performance Cult, staging avant-garde spectacles which sometimes involved showering the audience with offal and blood and always climaxed with a song from

THE
BEST
OF

ANOJNI

Torch songs, tragi-disco, weird cover versions, stellar collaborations and a manta ray...

1 **Antony and the Johnsons** **Cripple And The Starfish** (2000)

This stunning meditation on love and pain, first attempted in 1996, is the Johnsons' debut album's most enduring song.

2 **Antony and the Johnsons** **I Fell In Love With A Dead Boy** (2001)

Lou Reed said that when he heard this eerie torch song, he was hooked on Anohni's voice within 15 seconds.

3 **Lou Reed** **Candy Says** (2004)

It's as if Reed's compassionate ode to transgender Warhol starlet Candy Darling had been waiting decades for this voice to sing it on Reed's live album *Animal Serenade*.

4 **Antony and the Johnsons** **Hope There's Someone** (2005)

Anohni's most famous song is a spine-shivering ballad about longing and mortality. Since covered by Avicii and contestants on *The Voice*.



Anohni. “Whatever you saw, no matter how hideous or bizarre, you knew you would get this beautiful, incredible song at the end,” Constantine told this writer.

Anohni formed Antony and the Johnsons (a tribute to Marsha P Johnson, the transgender activist who helped kickstart the Stonewall riots) in 1998 and released their self-titled debut album in 2000, using a deliberately “antiquated aesthetic” of piano and strings. In a recent Facebook post she wrote that she was told that “there was no chance that someone like me could have a career in music... I almost gave up.” (She refuses to elaborate: “Just quote the post.”)

That she persevered is partly down to the support of Lou Reed, who invited her to tour and record with him in 2003. Anohni reckons she reminded Reed of an earlier collaborator, the contralto jazz singer Jimmy Scott. “Jimmy’s voice was so sinewy, so feminine. It’s like a pearl that formed around a piece of sand: something painful becomes very smooth. Lou appreciated that because his voice was something painful that stayed very rough.” Anohni remained friends with Reed until his death and is still close to his widow, Laurie Anderson. “She’s so courageous,” she says. “She’s been a big inspiration.” »

“I was looking for something very specific in New York. I had certain things I wanted to do, which I did.”



Flying high: winning the Mercury Music Prize for 2005’s *I Am A Bird Now*.

5 **Hercules & Love Affair**

Blind (2008)

Anohni goes tragi-disco, filling New York producer Andy Butler’s deluxe house music with anguish and loss.

6 **Antony and the Johnsons**

Epilepsy Is Dancing (2009)

An epileptic seizure recast as a chamber-pop waltz. “There’s tenderness to things being broken,” Anohni explained.

7 **Antony and the Johnsons**

Crazy In Love (2009)

Anohni outdoes even her fine Dylan and Cohen covers with an intense, yearning take on Beyoncé’s hit. Minus Jay Z’s bit, obviously.

8 **Antony and the Johnsons**

Thank You For Your Love (2010)
Anohni locates her inner Al Green on this gospel-tinged Southern soul banger. She doesn’t just do sad songs, you know.

9 **J Ralph & Anohni**

Manta Ray (2015)

Haunting, Oscar-nominated collaboration with composer J Ralph, sung from the perspective of the endangered sea creature.

10 **Anohni**

4 Degrees (2016)

Anohni sarcastically revels in eco-doom over Hudson Mohawke’s thunderclap beats and ominous synth fanfares.

Anohni's bookie-defying Mercury win in 2005 changed her life. *I Am A Bird Now* went gold and standout ballad *Hope There's Someone* became such a modern classic that it was recently covered on *The Voice*. Here was a transcendently unique voice that wrestled with love, sex, life, death and identity, through a spellbinding alloy of strength and delicacy. A natural collaborator across disciplines, she produced a string of guest vocals, an art book, a documentary and a movie score for Marina Abramovic, who said that she wanted Anohni to sing *My Way* at her funeral.

At the same time, Anohni was music's most prominent transgender artist. "It's been very empowering for me to see my own truth reflected in the media," she says. "It's powerful for a young generation of trans kids to see their reflection in their media."

She disputes the idea that political lyrics aren't personal ("In fact, they're probably more personal than anything I've written in a long time") but, for now, she has lost interest in "biographical" material.

"I don't need the same things from music that I needed in my 20s or 30s," she says. "I'm not going to it for the same reasons."

Earlier this year, a good thing turned bad for Anohni. Manta Ray, her song from the documentary *Racing Extinction*, was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Original Song but the Academy decided not to invite her to perform at the ceremony. The subsequent press coverage of the snub, and the Academy's lack of support, made her decide to boycott the process, condemning the Oscars on Facebook as "a little tap dance to occupy you while Rome burns".

"You buy respect in America," she says.

"The Academy Awards is a capitalist process. They didn't give a shit what was going on with me. They didn't care that I was being raked through the press. It left me feeling completely embarrassed and ambivalent. Regardless of whether they cast me in their show – I couldn't care less – they didn't talk to me. In fact, they said incredible, unbelievable things to us in the final stages which were so insulting. To me, it's just a tiny version of a much bigger problem. It's part of a system that undermines us all."

If she had attended the ceremony, Anohni would probably not have applauded Asif Kapadia's *Amy* when it won Best Documentary. "It was like a snuff film to me," she says sharply. "It was repulsive because everybody was complicit in thinking they were supporting her by paying £10 to watch her die again and get that thrill ride. I find

"I'm speaking to you despite my fear of speaking to you. I'm not particularly confident, but I'm trying to participate."



It's not easy being green:
Anohni, Primavera Sound,
Barcelona, Spain, May 2015.

that repugnant. This kind of exploitative media is so easy to swallow and tastes good and gives you a rush, but is it right?"

Whether she's ostensibly addressing Oscar politics, Amy Winehouse or transgender rights, Anohni always ends up talking about the big picture: the unequal distribution of wealth and power and its implications for the planet. Hopelessness, she says, is about identifying the connections between apparently separate problems.

"I think of it like an illness that has these different faces but the different faces amplify and exacerbate each other and provoke a final outcome, which is eco-collapse. We come at these issues one at a time but that's like coming at the ocean with a broom."

The song she was most nervous about releasing is Obama, on which she attacks both the President and her own assumptions that he would be different. "There was a universal sense of hope," she says of his election in 2008. "I remember crying. Everyone was crying. It was such a miracle, but then the narrative of his presidency has had a different track. I wanted to review my own naïveté."

Obama is, nonetheless, preferable to the grim possibility of President Donald Trump, who she sees as "a Putin-style character: a megalomaniac, completely volatile money baron. I think if you elect him there's a good chance we'll have a nuclear bomb sent to Syria within six months of his becoming President."

Anohni described 2010's *Swanlights* as "a collision between joy and a sense of hopelessness". Clearly, the latter has won the upper hand. Her mindset resembles a Doomsday Clock set to one minute to midnight. Did she at least find the process of channelling her preoccupations into a great record cathartic? Did it, on some level, make her feel better?

She pulls a face. "It's not about feeling better! I don't really make art for therapeutic value. I have in the past but I don't do it any more."

It's clear that Anohni does not exactly vibrate with delight at the interview experience. She is full of self-doubt and suspicion. When I excuse myself to go to the toilet she sighs, "Sorry, I'm boring you to death." I forget to turn off my Dictaphone and when I listen back to the audio file later, her silence while I'm away is broken by a sharp cry of "Fucking fuck".

"I'm filled with fear and I'm acting despite my fear," she says. "I'm speaking to you despite my fear of speaking to you. Ask any of my friends and they'll tell you I'm not a particularly confident person. But I'm trying to participate."



giving it a whirl. I could easily bore you with titillating biography. I could do what normal people do in these situations and prattle on about things that don't matter, but nobody's going to care about any of this stuff. I just don't want to be asleep."


Anohni is realistic about what she can achieve. She knows that *Hopelessness* is only a pop record. She admits that she's not an expert on any of these issues. She's aware that her celebrity is somewhat niche. She's conscious, too, that she is making herself vulnerable to attack.

You're scared?
"Of course I'm scared. I'm shitting terrified, but I'm just

"Of course," she says. "It's an absolutely hateful environment in that regard. There's so many snipers in the field now, so many frustrated people. Of course, all sorts of criticisms are going to be levelled at me and most of those people can fuck off."

That was unexpected. Suddenly, there's a glimpse of the formidable 19-year-old who once wrote those words on her forehead, the newcomer with a reckless sense of abandon.

"Honestly, they can fuck off!" she continues. "What difference are any of those criticisms going to make in 100 years when everyone's bobbing on the greenhouse tides?"

When she puts it that way, you can see Anohni's point. What has she got to lose? 

"It's a hateful environment":
(left) this year's *Hopelessness*;
(above) Anohni, London, 2016.



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"As good now as they've ever been..."
New Order (Phil Cunningham, Stephen Morris, Bernard Sumner, Tom Chapman, Gillian Gilbert), New York, March 2016.



SECOND BITE OF THE APPLE

Rejuvenated electro-pop pioneers return to New York for a euphoric performance.

NEW ORDER

RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL, NEW YORK, THURSDAY, 10 MARCH, 2016

★★★★

There's a moment four-and-a-half minutes into New Order's *Plastic* when everybody onstage stops playing and allows the machines to take over. A throbbing Giorgio Moroder-style bassline and sleek, dappled synthesizers weave around each other as the rhythm almost falls apart, then coalesces in time for the band to kick back in. It's a wonderful example of New Order at their most sublime; recalling those moments in their records where musicians and machines seem perfectly matched in order to create something truly otherworldly.

Performed in the art-deco majesty of New York's Radio City Music Hall to an audience ranging from tipsy to totally battered, the screens above the black-clad band showing a computer-generated motorway (surely a nod to Kraftwerk), *Plastic* confirms New Order's renaissance. As last year's magnificent album *Music Complete* confirmed, they're as good now as they've ever been. »

DAVID ANDRAKO

It seems rather brutal to say that absentee bassist Peter Hook isn't missed, but you could say New Order were actually more diminished by the absence of keyboardist Gillian Gilbert, who departed the band in 2001 and returned 10 years later. Certainly her return has resulted in New Order's best album since 1989's *Technique*, and their rediscovery of electronic pop, their mastery of which – along with their incredible minimalist aesthetics – was the thing that set them miles ahead of their '80s indie peers. Standing stage right, prodding a synthesizer and, as ever, looking mildly terrified, Gilbert completes New Order.

"Virtually every song on the album is geared towards playing live," says Bernard Sumner, sitting in his dressing room before the show. "It's very easy when you start writing an album to write slow, introspective, moody numbers – I call them 'my budgie's just died' songs – and we specifically made a point of going 'no': to earn the right to write a slow song first you have to write three uptempo songs. Then we finished the album and realised we hadn't written any slow songs, but it's paid off."

So well, in fact, that tonight the band even get away with not playing *Blue Monday*, recently acclaimed as the best single of the '80s and, at the time of the gig, making its way around the internet as a meme in a version played on obsolete instruments. It's only during the encore that the stage manager tells Sumner that they only have time to play one more song. He asks the audience whether they'd prefer *Love Will Tear Us Apart* or *Blue Monday*. They get equal cheers, so



"FOR MY 60th BIRTHDAY I WAS GIVEN A BOX OF MALTESERS."
BERNARD SUMNER

"Well, I can only imagine that's sheer enthusiasm – I can't imagine that any of our fans would require chemical assistance, a chemically elevated mood, drugs or anything like that," Sumner will chuckle after the gig. "Of course the band do not approve of that kind of thing."



Gillian Gilbert: "as ever, looking mildly terrified."

having already strapped on his guitar, Sumner plumps for the Joy Division classic. Later, Sumner will explain that the curtailing of the set felt "a bit like being a footballer and you're about to kick the winning goal in but then someone comes up to you and says, 'No, stop, you can't do that'. It was a bit frustrating but it wasn't the end of the world because it was a great gig. I think everyone enjoyed it."

Certainly the fans near Q don't seem shortchanged – especially the woman racing up and down the aisle, the turbo-raving couple working up a sweat or the writhing man whooping and screaming every 30 seconds. In fact, despite the fact that few here are in their first flush of youth, quite a lot of the audience seem pretty smashed.

Love Will Tear Us Apart is one of only two Joy Division songs in the set – the other is *Atmosphere*, performed with the original Anton Corbijn video broadcast on the screens above the band, in which cowed figures move across sand dunes, eventually carrying images of Ian Curtis, the band's singer, who killed himself aged 23. After all these years, the song still possesses an unearthly beauty and gravitas.

Old hits in the set include *Bizarre Love Triangle* and *True Faith*, two of New Order's most perfect synth-pop moments, extended to luxury length. Both from 1983's *Power, Corruption & Lies*, 586's primordial mechanical thump is still irresistible, while *Your*



Everything's gone green: (clockwise from left) Bernard Sumner (centre) leads his troops with a spot of heavy riffage; Radio City Music Hall in all its art-deco glory; the band enjoying the spotlight once again.



Setlist

Singularity
Ceremony
Academic
Crystal
586
Tutti Frutti
Restless
Your Silent Face
People On The High Line
Bizarre Love Triangle
Waiting For The Sirens' Call
Plastic
The Perfect Kiss
True Faith
Temptation
Encore
Atmosphere
Love Will Tear Us Apart

Silent Face grows from a quiet synth pulse to a stratospheric wall-of-sound climax. It's enhanced by a gorgeous film of glass skyscrapers, glittering oceans and a massive shipwreck rusting on the shore, as enigmatic and awe-inspiring as the song itself.

The setlist also reflects the band's justified confidence in the new album – they play seven songs from it including, for the first time, the glacial, imperious Academic.

New York City itself gets three nods. There's the title of People On The High Line, inspired by a stroll Sumner took on the elevated West Side walkway one day. Temptation starts off with the riffing strings from Lou Reed's Street Hassle. Most overt of all, The Perfect Kiss is accompanied by footage of the Empire State Building from Amos Poe's film Empire II, itself inspired by Andy Warhol's eight-hour movie of the structure.

The next day, after he's had lunch with the composer Philip Glass, Sumner explains that the city has a special place in New Order history. "In the early days we used to spend a lot of time here – we recorded Ceremony, In

A Lonely Place, Confusion and Thieves Like Us here, and we spent an awful lot of time in the clubs once we discovered that you could get free drinks tickets because you were moderately famous. We went to some mad clubs – Confusion was shot in the Funhouse, which was a Puerto Rican club. It was a bit hairy in there," he laughs. "There was a wild atmosphere."

Last night's gig underlined the paradox of New Order: that work of such widescreen grandeur is made by resolutely ordinary, piss-taking people. "I was about to go for a massage and I've just received an email saying I'm booked in for a 'Brazilian'," Sumner informs Q. "Is that like a crack-and-sack wax? I think they've got it wrong. I definitely don't want one of them!"

This and the Blue Monday mishap aside, NO are once more forging boldly into the future, playing gigs around the world all year (including four shows at the Sydney Opera House), undeterred by the fact that Sumner turned 60 on 4 January. "When you're younger you tend to put that to the back of your mind because it's such a horrific thought, and then one day it fucking

happens to you," he says. "I can't say I like it. But I don't count the numbers really. For one thing my birthday's just after Christmas and New Year so even when I was a kid we never made a big deal of it. Like, for my 60th birthday I was given a box of Maltesers. You're as old as you feel. Unfortunately, I do feel 60 today," he laughs. "No, I feel at least six months younger!"

The euphoria in New York confirms that New Order are enjoying an incredible late-career flourish of the kind they never would have foreseen. In fact, says Sumner, it's so unexpected that he doesn't quite trust it. "I always start getting worried when things start going right – it doesn't feel like a natural state of being, having been in New Order for all these years, to suddenly finally have something that seems to be going well. I'm like, 'What's up? What has the Lord got in store for us this time?'"

With a history including death, bankruptcy and ferocious internal feuding, Sumner's suspicion is justified. But, for now, this show confirms that New Order are in yet another golden era. **ALEX NEEDHAM**

"It's my fking show":
Adele lays down the law,
The O2, London,
15 March, 2016.**

HOMETOWN GLORY

The global superstar is at the top of her game for this first of an eight-night residency in the capital.

ADELE

THE O2, LONDON,
TUESDAY, 15 MARCH, 2016

★★★

There is a point in tonight's show, shortly after the mellow sit-down version of Bob Dylan's Make You Feel My Love, where it starts to look suspiciously like Adele has rigged her audience with stooges from Central Casting. First, there was the adorable small boy she invited up onstage to ruffle and "awww!" over. Then, there was the rowdy gang of wine-clutching girls who, unperturbed by the fact Adele is performing to 20,000 people, started pleading with the singer to defend them against the security guards trying to move them from their seats. "Put those girls back!" shouted Adele, fighter for the people. "It's my fucking show."

This, though, is the ultimate in audience participation: Adele, noticing a flurry of cameras going off in one spot, thinks a fight had broken out. Looking closer, she notices it is a couple kissing. "Oh my God, did you just get engaged?" she squeals. "Get up here!" The couple join her onstage, to be interrogated about the ring, and the setting of the date, and how long they've been together. They have a baby, the audience discover, but he's at home. Otherwise, Adele probably would have kissed it.

Even though 25 has left her with little to prove, there is something of the campaigning politician about Adele tonight. "Some of you have been dragged along tonight but I'm going to win you over," she says, promising the uncommitted that lots of people have sex after her shows. Never mind the waves of adoration that greet her as she rises magnificently through the floor of a stage in the middle of the arena, Hello billowing around her: she wants every person in her thrall. She wins, of course: there can be very few people here who do not leave thinking Adele is their BFF. Her communication skills are formidable, and not just when she's singing those emotionally resilient, glossily soulful songs.

The first of eight nights at the O2, this is Adele's hometown show, and while there are none of the Imodium references she made at the start of the tour, she has other issues to discuss. She explains how she's been "living off leaves" in the run-up to these dates, guarding her voice jealously (a Mother's Day mug of hot honey



The uncommon touch: the South London star brings it all back home.

Setlist

Hello
Hometown
Glory
—
One And Only
—
Rumour Has It
—
Water Under
The Bridge
—
I Miss You
—
Skyfall
—
Million
Years Ago
—
Don't You
Remember
—
Send My Love
(To Your New
Lover)
—
Make You Feel
My Love
—
Sweetest
Devotion
—
Chasing
Pavements
—
Someone
Like You
—
Set Fire To
The Rain
—
Encore:
—
All I Ask
—
When We
Were Young
—
Rolling In
The Deep

IT'S A JOY TO SEE A FEMALE POP STAR WHO IS A PROPER PHYSICAL – NOT JUST SEXUAL – PRESENCE.

stands next to her all night.) She woke up this morning, checked her voice. Fine. Checked her face. Acne. "I've got an alien on my head," she wails. "I know we all get spots, but you haven't got your face up there." She mock-ruefully points at the big screen.

Starry mystique is great, but there's something wonderful about a 27-year-old pop star who comes onstage and complains about her skin. Before she tears through the quivering nostalgia of Million Years Ago, she tells the story of how she came to write it, weeping as she passed her old South London haunts: "I think I was due on my period." She talks about having a glass of champagne shortly after her son was born – "pumping and dumping, ooh!" She even draws attention to her burping. It's a joy to see a female pop star who is a proper physical – not just sexual – presence, who isn't afraid of birth, blood and breast-feeding and isn't about to apologise for them.

If it sounds like tonight's show is a visceral cross between Babes In Toyland and Dry-era PJ Harvey, the reality is more Loose Women meets Shirley Bassey, the presence of the latter especially strong on the 007 finery of Skyfall. The Gone Till November kiss-off of Send My Love (To Your New Lover) and retro strut

of Rumour Has It show Adele can have fun, but it's the obsession with righting wrongs, looking back, balancing the emotional books, that have made these songs hit so many homes. Chasing Pavements and Someone Like You run free in their natural singalong environment, while When We Were Young's poignancy is upped by a backdrop of childhood photos.

The Everywoman shtick doesn't ring completely true, but how could it? She might rhapsodise about drinking cider in London parks, but those days are gone, transformed into globally successful ballads. There's no hiding it: Adele is at the top of her game, on top of the world. "It's my fucking show." Nobody would doubt it for a second. VICTORIA SEGAL

sky ARTS

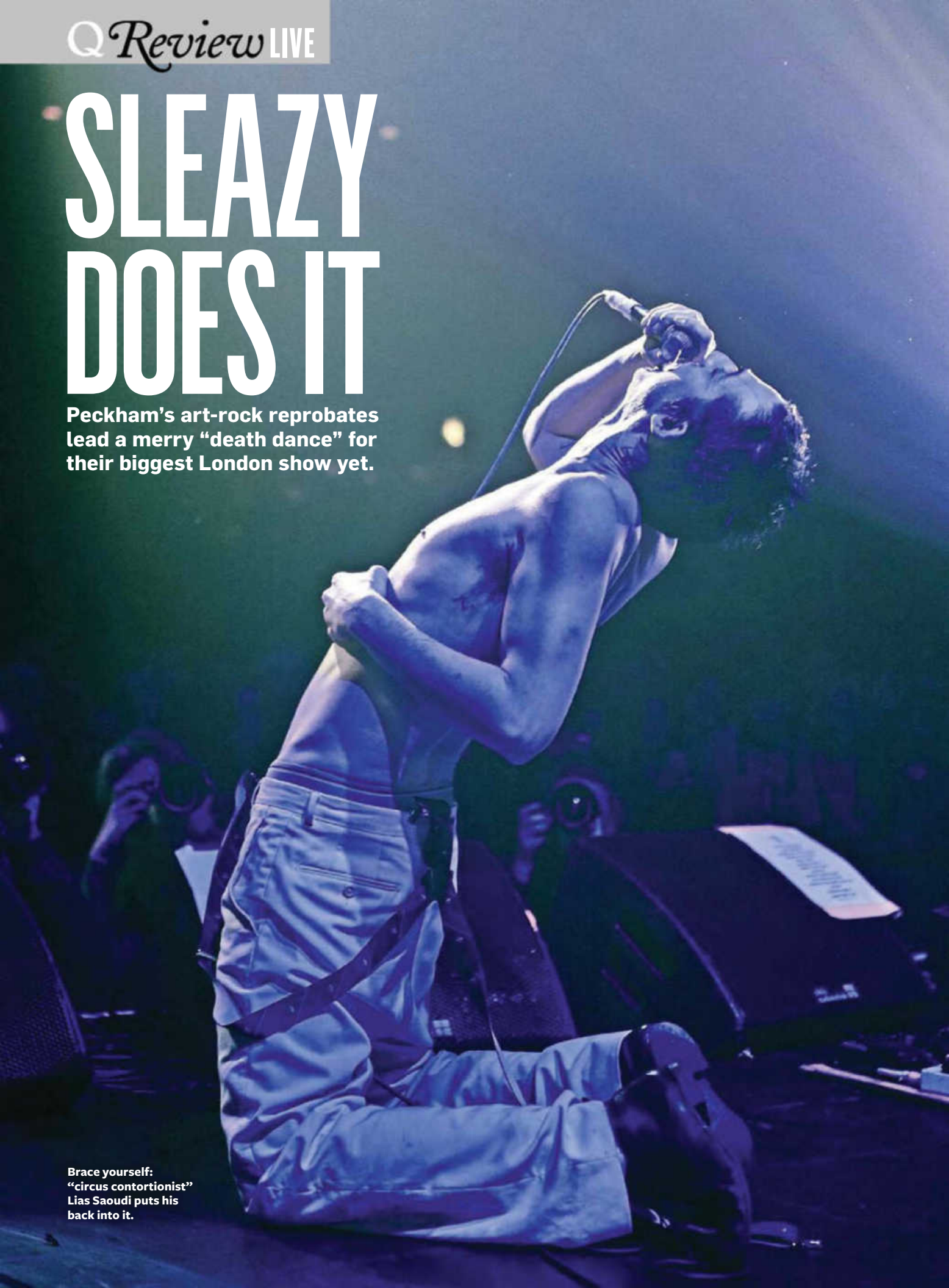
You can watch Adele live whenever you want with Sky Arts on demand.

Adele: Live From The Artist's Den Grammy Award-winner Adele performs hits including Rolling In The Deep and Someone Like You for a small group of lucky fans at the Santa Monica Bay Woman's Club in California.

SLEAZY DOES IT

Peckham's art-rock reprobates lead a merry "death dance" for their biggest London show yet.

Brace yourself:
"circus contortionist"
Lias Saoudi puts his
back into it.



FAT WHITE FAMILY

THE CORONET, LONDON
WEDNESDAY, 9 MARCH, 2016

★★★★

B

ackstage at Elephant & Castle's 2600-capacity Coronet theatre, Fat White Family frontman Lias Saoudi is

surveying the once magnificent, now left-to-rot dressing room where, back in the 1890s, the young Charlie Chaplin would have prepared for some of his earliest performances. "It's horrible," he grimaces. "People's stereotypes of what it's like being in a rock band are stuck in the '70s. This is the reality, the place is on its last legs."

With FWF's reputation as free-thinkin', drug-smokin', shit-smearin', sociopathic rave-punks preceding them, it's a surprise to hear Saoudi speak ill of our elegantly putrefying surroundings, which on some symbolic level say everything you might need to know about the decadent, deranged art-rock death-rattle that is his band's second and latest LP, *Music For Our Mothers*.

Conceived in nearby Peckham, tonight the group's music will benefit from the return after a spell in rehab of co-founder Saul Adamczewski, the group's sonic architect whose eccentric soundscapes have, since 2013's chequered debut *Champagne Holocaust*, proved a fitting vehicle for Saoudi's disturbing ruminations on mass murderers, Fascist politicians, hatred, love and fantasies of being The Fall's Mark E Smith. The two main players' fractious, Pete'n'Carl-style relationship has long enriched Fat Whites' car-crash allure – a status unlikely to be altered by Adamczewski's comparative newfound sobriety.

"Since he's been back, he's been off the smack," explains Saoudi, in his bizarre Yorkshire-cum-Scottish accent, and who tonight is looking



Family affair: says Saoudi of his friendship with Saul Adamczewski (far right) – "friends one minute, the next we want to headbutt each other."

Setlist

Auto Neutron

Whitest Boy
On The Beach

Is It Raining In
Your Mouth?

I Am Mark E
Smith

Cream Of The
Young

Satisfied

We Must Learn
To Rise

Wild American
Prairie

Garden Of The
Numb

Touch The
Leather

Goodbye
Goebbels

Bomb
Disneyland

TONIGHT'S SHOW IS LIKE A GROUP PARTYING ON THE EDGE OF SOME UNSEEN APOCALYPSE.

unsettlingly like one of The Style Council in his hound's-tooth overcoat, white trousers and Mod-cropped hair. "But we're still friends one minute, then the next we want to headbutt each other. The difference is, now he's clean, he's almost like a human being."

When the band take the stage, for their biggest London audience yet, it's immediately evident just how fervent the Fat White Family cult has become in the last year. Tonight is a sell-out and, as there's no seating restrictions, virtually every punter crams into the downstairs auditorium. As the pulsing beat of *Auto Neutron* starts up, viewed from the balcony above the crowd becomes a teeming mass, there being no discernible moshpit but instead myriad swirling eddies of humanity creating strange, chaotic patterns.

Onstage, FWF's singular MO is injured by their almost complete disregard for conventional stagecraft, the lanky Adamczewski standing impassively at his mic while strumming a white Vox Phantom guitar, the other musicians milling around like it's a first rehearsal. All this, of course, contrasts with Saoudi's extraordinary gyrations: stripped to the waste, he writhes and kneels, shouts and beats his chest, sits on the drum-riser and bends backwards like a circus contortionist. If Henry Rollins was an Anglo-Algerian art student with a big gob, this might be him.

The propulsive Krautrock groove and floaty melody of *Songs For Our Mothers*' first single, *Whitest Boy On The Beach*, heats the room into a

sweaty cauldron, followed by the fuzzy electro-garage psych of *Is It Raining In Your Mouth?*. Satisfied, a track co-written with their unlikely "guardian angel" and über-fan Sean Lennon, elicits the disco chorus chant from the crowd before it even gets anywhere near the chorus. *We Must Learn To Rise* triggers a further bout of euphoria. Genres merge and dirge-like meanderings blur, melodies rise and fall, screams are screamed, until a breather of sorts arrives with the acoustic *Goodbye Goebbels*, an imagined parting conversation between Hitler and his propaganda minister in which they tenderly reminisce about old times.

The song's verboten subject matter – Hitler as sentimental human – is grist for FWF's dark mythology, amped up further by sleazy renditions of *Touch The Leather* and rave finale *Bomb Disneyland*, during which photographer friend Alex Sebley appears onstage dressed in flasher coat and underpants.

With its tinges of fin-de-siècle angst and Weimar-era, Cabaret-style dissipation, tonight's performance can't help but suggest an outlandishly expressive group partying on the edge of some unseen apocalypse. "With Donald Trump, the Fourth Reich may soon be coming," Saoudi had mused earlier. "He's like Mussolini on steroids. It's a death dance we're doing, and to have lent grace to a time where there isn't any, that's the highest accolade for any artist."

And it may be bestowed on them yet. *PAT GILBERT*

"Um, can I at least get my shoes and socks back, please?"



THIS MONTH

NEW ALBUMS REISSUES

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URBAN WHIMS

Ex-Verve man wanders into G-funk and rave as he aims for that new-but-ancient sound.



RICHARD ASHCROFT

THESE PEOPLE

RPA/COOKING VINYL,

OUT 20 MAY

Richard

Ashcroft once gave British guitar music a welcome kick up the arse. In 1992, while The Stone Roses were plotting their Second Coming and Happy Mondays' magic was vanishing in a puff of crack smoke, the Verve leader restored colour and swagger to indie-rock amid the overcast, sexless tones of grunge and shoegazing. A barefoot, Rizla-thin shaman fronting eight-minute singles that frothed with lysergic adventure, he talked of being able to fly powered by his mind alone. Some dubbed him "Mad Richard" but he was more fun than most of his peers.

It wasn't anything so cosmic that made Ashcroft a star, though. In 1997, The Verve's 10-million-selling Urban Hymns dialled down the celestial grandeur in favour of accessibility. Dark emotions were lit up by euphoric hooks and Nick McCabe's guitar was wiggled-out dressing on the robust framework of Ashcroft's soulful songwriting.

Three solo albums held onto that balance, pitching Ashcroft as an unflinchingly serious but completely on-his-rocker troubadour. As he picked away at the meaning of life and love, his gift for emotive melodies was gently countered by flourishes from the right-hand-side of left-field: a tabla pattern here, a Brian Wilson collaboration there. After The Verve's brief reunion, 2010's United Nations Of Sound album, recorded with hip-hop producer No ID, was hamstrung by cloying positivity. Ashcroft drifted home to explore new ideas in his basement studio and a career that had begun with such ambition seemed to have stalled.

Since then, the world's been flooded with male singer-songwriters trading in big choruses and universal emotions. Ashcroft's turf has been overrun by what he calls "empty anthems". Maybe some new areses need kicking. So, galvanised by a handful of solo shows last year, he's recruited Urban Hymns co-producer Chris Potter and strings arranger Wil Malone to help shape an album that casts him, in his own words, as "a modern-day troubadour... trying to find new textures and sounds to accompany an ancient art."

Assisted by Madonna producer Mirwais, opener Out Of My Body upholds that aim, beginning with a percussive, outlaw-country strum before dismounting into rave synths. Suggesting that United Nations Of Sound was a good idea after all, Ain't The Future So Bright's optimism even evokes G-Funk with its portamento synth flares, vocoder and quasi-rap.

Over its course though, These People toggles between the exploratory and the familiar. Weaved on the same loom as The Verve's Lucky Man, They Don't Own Me is one of the best songs he's written, its baleful sweep of slide guitar and strings resolving into a euphoric, stadium-sized chorus. And like his old band's comeback single Love Is Noise, This Is How It Feels nudges its drivetime hooks off the middle of the road with spectral vocal samples.

There are wonky moments. Songs Of Experience's attempts to inflate his music's existential import are undermined by a pedestrian pop stomp. And, not for the first time, his barroom philosophies ask big questions without offering many answers. He's talked about global conflicts and uprisings providing the background to this record but his ire is directed at broad targets: "these people". Life, he knows, can be "vicious", "a riddle", but his solution is largely the titular rallying cry of Hold On. Ashcroft's Everyman appeal has always been in sweeping strokes rather than forensic depth, though. When it's wedded to a chorus as stirring as his self-belief, a line such as, "They don't own me" can offer empathy whether you're occupying Wall Street or appealing a parking ticket.

In fact, he's more absorbing the more personal he gets. Black Lines, an early-hours ballad about a passed friend, turns despair into stoic defiance with a voice that's aged tremendously: still rich and dramatic, but nuanced and temperate in the right places.

A decade ago, Ashcroft told Q he didn't see himself recording his own music in 10 years' time. He'd be writing for others while Dolly Parton covered his hits. It's not panned out that way but he still has something to say and an engaging way of saying it. It won't change the world, but These People will give those other troubadours something to think about. ★★ ★

MATT MASON

Download: They Don't Own Me | Ain't The Future So Bright | Black Lines

LEO BUND

ASHCROFT STILL HAS
SOMETHING TO SAY
AND AN ENGAGING
WAY OF SAYING IT.



Richard Ashcroft:
“toggling between
the exploratory and
the familiar.”

Mix It Up

Three more LPs
that meld the
old and the new



Beastie Boys To The 5 Boroughs

CAPITOL, 2004

This retreat into spare, old-school hip-hop actually marked the first time the trio had really embraced computers as instruments – allowing them to warp samples to match them to one another.

★★★★



Beck Odelay

GEFFEN, 1996

The alt-rock maverick's LP began as mopey acoustic sessions before Beastie Boys producers the Dust Brothers helped turn it into a rich, hip-hop flavoured assault on folk, rock and jazz.

★★★★★



Wilco Summerteeth

REPRISE, 1999

Armed with Pro Tools and painkillers, Jeff Tweedy and Jay Bennett deconstruct alt-country and earn the tag “The American Radiohead”.

★★★★★

9BACH ANIAN

REAL WORLD, OUT 29 APRIL

Dreamy Welsh folksters' third album.



When 2014's *Tincian* won Best Album at the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards, it nudged Bethesda's 9Bach from their Welsh language ghetto to a

welcoming wider world. Lisa Jen is still singing in Welsh but, like *Le Mystere des Voix Bulgares* before them, 9Bach weave their tales so delicately that telling them in a minority language need not be their commercial death knell. Jen's vocals are beguiling, but behind her lies all sorts of wonder: *Cyfaddefa*'s Eastern-influenced spartan percussion; Heno's almost Enya-like wall of vocals; Llyn Du's cascading choruses. There's even a harp on *Ifan*. The CD version has an additional disc of English interpretations (rather than translations) of the 11 tracks, from a rum constellation including Peter Gabriel, Maxine Peake and Rhys Ifans. The songs become more conventionally meaningful, but less mysterious. ★★

JOHN AIZLEWOOD

Download: Llyn Du | Cyfaddefa | Ifan | Breuddwyd Y Bardd

ALL SAINTS

RED FLAG

EMI, OUT 8 APRIL

Never say never ever. Girl band return.



All Saints were a particular jar of lady marmalade which was thought well past its self-by date. But after saying they'd never

re-form, here they are again, the New Look Spice Girls, the H&M Bewitched, with a new album which might well be the best of their career. Unlike previous efforts, which have relied on a standout moment – the William Orbit classic *Pure Shores*, the slow-drag ballad *Never Ever* – Red Flag is both consistent and memorable. First single *One Strike*, which is apparently about



LISTEN TO THIS...
Steve Mason



Le Volume Courbe
I Wish Dee Dee Ramone Was Here With Me

PICKPOCKET, 2015

"My friend Charlotte Marionneau has got an LP out at the moment as *Le Volume Courbe* which is brilliant. Kevin Shields did a lot of the production and plays guitar on it but it's not like MBV. It sounds really sweet and is a little bit acoustic-y and poppy. It's a truly great record."

Nicole Appleton's split with Liam Gallagher, is excellent and throughout, songs as varied as the gnarly *Ratchet Behaviour* and the '90s-faced ballad *Tribal* show that main writer Shaznay Lewis and her production collaborators know exactly what they're doing. ★★

DAVID QUANTICK

Download: Tribal | One Strike | Ratchet Behaviour

BABYMETAL METAL RESISTANCE

EARMUSIC, OUT NOW

Manufactured pop-metal idols deliver ADD thrills.



If Babymetal seem specifically designed to appeal to people who belong on some sort of register, there are clearly more of them

about than you'd expect: the Japanese pop phenomenon's current tour takes in a date at Wembley Arena. A trio of schoolgirl models assembled by a male-owned entertainment corporation and made to leap around screeching in short skirts to a hyperactive fusion of J-Pop and speed metal, there's something faintly creepy about the whole project. That said, their second studio album does have a strange charm, in short doses. Such as the *Dragonforce* collaboration *Road Of Resistance*, which combines finger-tangling, highly technical riffing with Haribo girl-pop, or super-catchy single *Karate*, perhaps the most concise iteration yet of Babymetal's Kawaii-meets-Kerrang! shtick. ★★

SIMON PRICE

Download: Road Of Resistance | Karate | The One

SAM BEAM AND JESCA HOOP

LOVE LETTER FOR FIRE

SUBPOP, OUT 15 APRIL

Iron And Wine singer draws mixed results from new collaborative outing.



This new side-project from Iron And Wine's Sam Beam was conceived to revive the ailing tradition of male/female romantic duets.

Undoubtedly, *Love Letter For Fire* achieves precisely that, it's just a shame it does so by adhering so strictly to the format. Throughout, Beam and Santa Rosa folk singer Jeca Hoop pass the love-stricken vocal baton with real charm, typically trading individual lines before converging for stirring harmonies. In the case of *One Way To Pray* and *Valley Clouds* the results are beautiful. Frustratingly, there's also cloying schmaltz on display here, too, with *Kiss Me Quick* and *We Two Are A Moon* both lacking a deftness of touch the pair certainly possess. The two have a great dynamic –

potentially even a special one – it's just not fully realised here. ★★

GEORGE GARNER

Download: One Way To Pray | Valley Clouds | Welcome To Feeling

BENEDICT BENJAMIN NIGHT SONGS

SUGARCOAT, OUT NOW

Dim the lights for the millennials' Only The Lonely...



Formerly of indie-folkies *The Mariner's Children* and Peggy Sue (Wichita), Ben Rubinstein renames himself a la Cumberbatch on this near-perfect

suite of vulnerable, love-lorn nocturnes. Aside from that, there is nothing arch in this tightly crafted half-hour. Clearly flowing from sleepless ruminations trying to process and bargain with a broken love affair, he has alchemised his pain into 10 poignantly memorable songs for the retro-leaning Fleet Foxes/Midlake/Richard Hawley crowd, embellishing one man and his guitar with self-harmonising vocals and elegant, often dramatic keyboard-and-string arrangements. Therapy for Rubenstein, consolation for the heartbroken and artistry for everyone. ★★

MAT SNOW

Download: Thin Skin | Better Man | Had What You Had | I Wish Your Lies Were Better

ANDREW BIRD ARE YOU SERIOUS

LOMA VISTA/DECCA, OUT NOW

Eclectic Chicago singer-songwriter goes for the direct approach on 10th solo album.



Calling a record "solid" usually sounds like a back-handed compliment, a euphemism for unimaginative, dull,

indigestible. In the case of *Are You Serious*, however, it means a collection of songs of pleasing weight and completeness, their musical joints expertly dovetailed, their detailing crisply hand-carved. Always smarter than the average violin-playing, whistling, swing-reviving indie-rock folk-singer, Andrew Bird plays it relatively straight here, sounding like Rufus Wainwright without his opera glasses on *Chemical Switches* and *Puma*, songs that elegantly ponder that pop standard, the mystery of romantic attraction. Fans of his wordplay will enjoy *Saints Preservus* and the Vampire Weekend-go-prog of *The New St Jude*, but it's *Left Handed Kisses*, the fist-swingingly angry country duet with Fiona Apple, that proves Bird can be at his best when most down to earth. ★★

VICTORIA SEGAL

Download: Left Handed Kisses | Chemical Switches | Puma

All Saints: "Red Flag is both consistent and memorable."



BACK TO LYF

Former WU LYF singer finds love and unveils his latest highfalutin project.



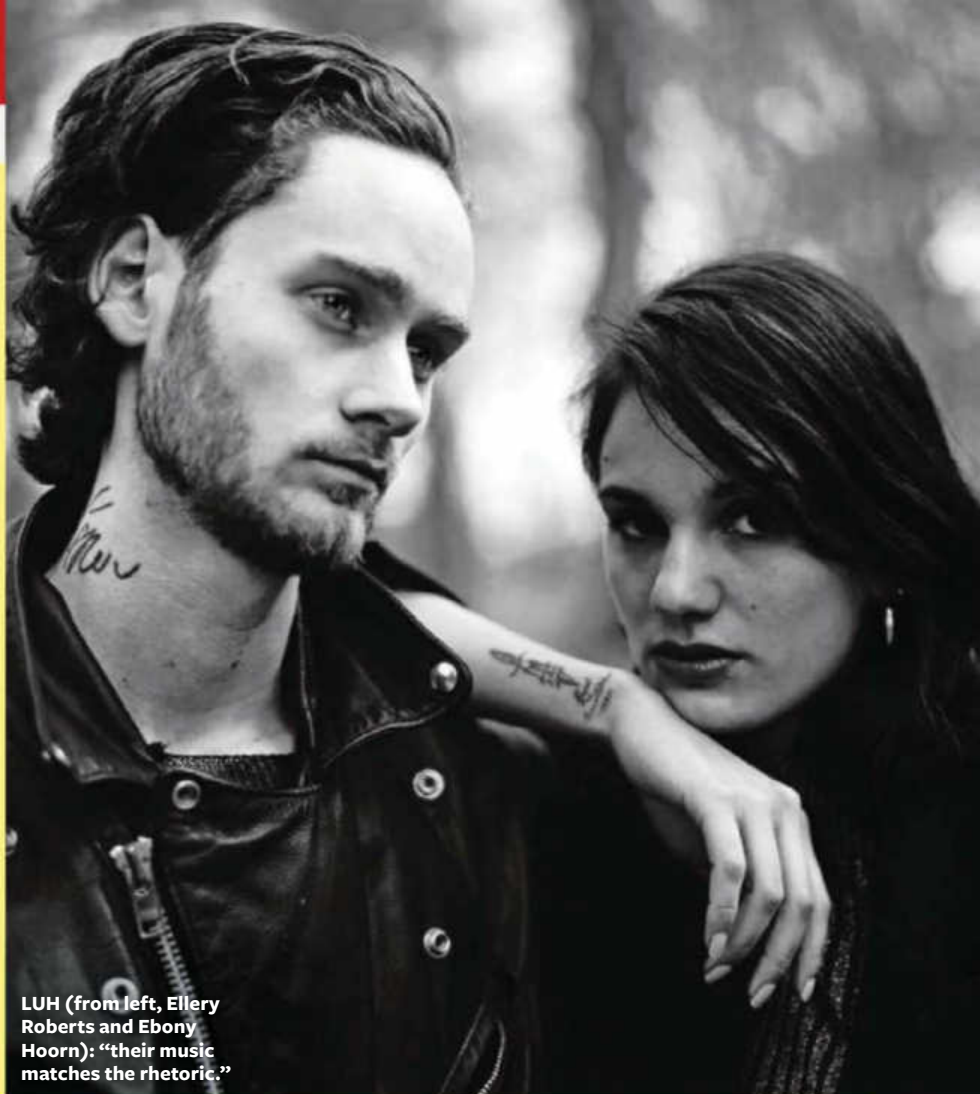
LUH SPIRITUAL SONGS FOR LOVERS TO SING

MUTE, OUT 6 MAY

One of the most intriguing bands to emerge from the UK

in the last decade, Manchester's WU LYF emerged with terrorist-chic artwork and online false trails that raised hopes of a groundbreaking musical proposition. Their 2011 debut LP, *Go Tell Fire To The Mountain*, was thrilling in places, but couldn't quite match up to their own masterplan. They split a year later, a shame because there was undeniably *something* about them and, in particular, their passionate and permanently tortured singer Ellery Roberts. That's why his return as LUH – a duo with his partner, Dutch artist Ebony Hoorn – has aroused such anticipation. Even if they do arrive with some familiar presentational trappings.

Based on "ideas not influences", LUH (it stands for Lost Under Heaven) are inspired by the theories of philosopher Buckminster Fuller and are here to "reject the status quo". Which is presumably why an early release came via BitTorrent and included a manifesto, a video slideshow featuring images of global suffering and alternate versions of the two released songs. Oasis, it isn't.



LUH (from left, Ellery Roberts and Ebony Hoorn): "their music matches the rhetoric."

LUH ARE HERE TO "REJECT THE STATUS QUO."

The good news, however, is that this time when you strip away the strategic framework there's something a little more substantial and beautiful at its heart. Roberts's sandpapery, Tom Waits-like vocals are still to the fore but here they're softened by a lighter, more electronic musical backing and Hoorn's own casually intoxicating voice.

Freed of a conventional band structure, LUH have clearly found room to experiment and have made expert use of it. The way the cavernous pounding of *Beneath The Concrete* gives way to the minimalist drift of *Future Blues* is genuinely thrilling, while the clipped and circling guitar melodicism of *Loyalty* and the acoustic simplicity of closer *The Great Longing* recall influences as diverse as *Spiritualized*, *Swans* and *Kendrick Lamar*. The music matches the rhetoric, and it's an undeniable triumph. ★★★★★

JAMES OLDHAM

Download: [i&i](#) | [Future Blues](#) | [The Great Longing](#) | [Loyalty](#)



LUH's Ellery Roberts explains to James Oldham how his new group, like his life, is an "experiment".

Do you think in hindsight with WU LYF there was too much emphasis on the presentation at the expense of the music?

Ellery Roberts: "I feel like that side of it was all part of it. It's out of your hands how people pick things up. Everything I try to create has a purpose. I guess as I get better as a songwriter I think everything I want to say can be said in a song."

LUH had a long gestation period. Why?

ER: "Initially I rejected the idea of making music, I got disillusioned. The whole point of LUH was to make something that was very free and experimental and joyful. It took its time because there were no deadlines."

You're not afraid of big ideas. What attracted you to the

American philosopher Buckminster Fuller?

ER: "I think anyone who comes into contact with his work is blown away by its breadth and his commitment to having a positive influence on the planet. His Spaceship Earth theory – that we're just people on a rock in space, and could be doing it all a lot better – is incredibly inspiring. I'm just excited by progressive people who envision a new world."

You seem pessimistic about the world's future...

ER: "We live in this kind of

purgatory. There's this obsolete old world that's falling to pieces around us but there are these new ever-expanding possibilities too. You can either look up or down and I'd say I was looking up."

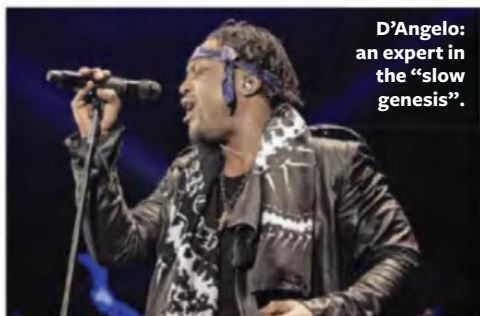
This record is much broader in scope musically. How freeing is it not to be in a band any more?

ER: "I've realised that everything I'm doing in life is an experiment and I don't know how it's going to turn out. There are no limits to what you can create. WU LYF was beautiful but now I don't have to compromise."

IT'S ALL TOO MUCH



Technological advances may have opened up the musical floodgates but more isn't always better, says **VICTORIA SEGAL**.



D'Angelo: an expert in the "slow genesis".

Not content with making a Heston Blumenthal meal out of *The Life Of Pablo*'s release, Kanye West recently announced his plans to expand his release schedule. "No more fashion calendar... I'm going Mad Max," he wrote on Twitter, that notoriously reliable and flattering portal into his head. "6 collections a year... 3 albums a year," he said, a declaration that would appear to promise another two albums before 2017. Given that he's still apparently tinkering with *The Life Of Pablo*, worrying at it like one of those handlers at Crufts who just can't stop bothering their dogs with a comb, it's hard not to wonder when he will have time.

The album/tour/album cycle has often been a bone of contention with artists who feel that their undoubtedly natural and mysterious muse should not be dictated to by the demands of the music industry's money-making calendar. It's only been

recently, however, that technology has enabled them to break free of that tyranny, allowing artists to release a song the second they are moved by developments in American politics, or love, or boredom, or hunger. The idea that these multiple releases represent a direct line into the creative process, a lava-like flow that

audiences can access immediately, is also compelling.

Yet three albums a year is a lot, and while the multiple-release approach is increasingly popular, it's unclear whether it stands as evidence of wild untrammelled creativity, or risks devaluing the product by flooding the market. There's a lot to be said for the mystique of anticipation, the glamour of scarcity: better, artistically, to be viewed as a Fabergé egg, rather than a Cadbury's Crème one. A sense of wonder is vital – and, although people might not like to admit it, so is a sense of novelty. It's buses that turn up in threes, not records. In the example of *My Bloody Valentine*, or D'Angelo, the slow genesis of a record is part of its story. Living in a constant present of new music might seem exciting, but the satisfactions of an album's narrative arc can't be understated, either. Without that beginning, middle and end, it risks not being a story any more. **A**

THERE'S A LOT TO BE SAID FOR ANTICIPATION AND FOR THE GLAMOUR OF SCARCITY.

BIRDY

BEAUTIFUL LIES

SLAM/ATLANTIC, OUT NOW

Third album from the former Jasmine van den Bogaerde.



When 2013's *Fire Within* eased its way into the UK Top 10 and US Top 30, Birdy seemed ready to fly. Although she doesn't

turn 20 until May, it's been three momentum-sapping years since and here she's taking no chances. Cherry Ghost's Simon Aldred collaborates on the funereal *Silhouette* and *Unbroken*, while Justin Parker, a regular Robin to Lana Del Rey's Batman, co-writes *Deep End*. Unsurprisingly, it turns her into a Del Rey-style character, albeit without the mystique. For all the craft she shows, for all her ability to move (*Words* is balm for trouble souls) and for all the promise of the zinging, Indian-inflected *Growing Pains*, Birdy is undone by an unwillingness to change her musical pace. Her moody teenage persona with nods to Carole King and Adele really shouldn't be taking three albums to evolve. **★★★**

JOHN AIZLEWOOD

Download: Words | Save Yourself

PETER BRUNTNELL

NOS DA COMRADE

DOMESTICO, OUT NOW

Back to basics for Devon-based treasure's 10th album.



After veering off into psych-folk for 2011's startling *Black Mountain UFO*, Peter Bruntnell returns to a more

straightforward Americana sound on his latest LP. Bruntnell's take on Americana is like no one else. It pays heed to the chime and chug of Neil Young on glorious nine-minute epic *Yuri Gagarin*, but it also recalls the songwriting heft of Elvis Costello on the likes of *Rainstars*' new wave-y punch and *Mr Sunshine*, an attack on Donald Trump's attempt to bully Scottish fishermen off their land so he could build a golf course. Bruntnell's empathy for what David Cameron would call "ordinary, hard-working people" is deft, and this wonderful album demonstrates why his near-peerless songwriting should be cherished. **★★★★**

ANDY FYFE

Download: Mr Sunshine | Yuri Gagarin

COVES

PEEL

1965, OUT NOW

Warwickshire psych-pop duo return.



In 2014, Coves released their debut album *Soft Friday* to wide acclaim. It suggested that though Beck Wood and John

Ridgard might appear to be yet another boy-girl duo in thrall to The

Velvet Underground, Phil Spector and all things groovy and '60s (see The Kills, The Raveonettes), dig deeper and you'll discover a far more multilayered proposition. Which makes this follow-up two years on so disappointing. Sonically, Peel is far more one-dimensional than its predecessor – yes, Ridgard's surf guitars and Wood's elegantly wasted vocals anchor proceedings as before, but the rough edges that made Coves such an exciting prospect in the first instance have been ironed out in a bid, it would appear, to tap the mainstream. It doesn't suit them. And though the baggy shuffle of *See Me Love Me* has a certain charm and the crunch and drive of opener *Cadavaler* hits the spot, elsewhere it's like a stiff, awkwardly spruced-up version of themselves that's being presented. **★★**

MATT YATES

Download: Cadavaler | See Me Love Me

J DILLA

THE DIARY

PAYJAY/MASS APPEAL, OUT 15 APRIL

Exhumed album by late hip-hop hero.



Back in the early noughties, Dilla was on the cusp of stardom. He'd left his group Slum Village to pursue a solo career and possessed a

production CV that included Common, Erykah Badu and De La Soul. Record label MCA duly commissioned an album. But where his hits as a producer had surfed the neo-soul wave, the album was something else, a bumpy, thumpy hip-hop record with few star guests and a lead single called *Fuck The Police* that the label had already skipped on post-9/11. MCA decided to live without the grief, the album was shelved and Dilla abandoned major labels for good.

Posthumously reassembled, *The Diary* is neither the production powerhouse he should've made – he mostly raps over others' beats here – nor the radical reinvention of 2003's *Ruff Draft*, but a supremely confident collection from an artist just gearing up for greatness. **★★★★**

STEVE YATES

Download: The Introduction | The Anthem | Fuck The Police | The Ex

EXMAGICIAN

SCAN THE BLUE

BELLA UNION, OUT NOW

Newly configured Belfast duo build some rock muscle.



Originally the songwriting force behind Cashier No 9, who released their David Holmes-produced debut album *To The Death Of*

Fun in 2011, Danny Todd and James Smith have transformed into exmagician. They are determined to push their love of indie genres past – baggy, shoegazing, jangle-pop

DEMO HAPPY

Enthralling album of out-takes from Compton's rap kingpin.



KENDRICK LAMAR UNTITLED UNMASTERED.

AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE, OUT NOW

When Kendrick Lamar appeared on the Tonight Show in January, viewers might have expected him to showcase something from

his acclaimed, Grammy-winning album *To Pimp A Butterfly* – especially as host Jimmy Fallon introduced him while holding up a copy. Instead, Lamar launched into a freeform, jazz-inspired jam with no chorus, hook or title, a move which might have appeared self-indulgent but for the intensity of Lamar's performance and the thrill of seeing the man hailed as the best rapper of his generation again testing the limits.

It turns out he was also signalling his next creative left turn, a variation on the song appearing on this surprise-released, eight-track collection of sessions from 2013-14 trailed by Lamar as: "Demos from To Pimp A Butterfly. In Raw Form. Unfinished. Untitled. Unmastered." Which might also sound unpromising, except Lamar's demos turn out to be as enigmatic and enthralling as anything he's released since 2012's *Good Kid, M.A.A.D. City* announced the arrival of a major new talent, full of dense, questioning rhymes and subtly shifting instrumental backdrops, from untitled 01's apocalyptic urgency to the fluid soul and naked self-examination of untitled 05.

By turns angry, reflective and intensely personal, with Lamar's conflicted emotions and internal debates echoed in the wandering jazz of untitled 03 and bittersweet CeeLo Green "duet", untitled 06, it never feels like an ego-trip. Instead, he's offering open minds an opportunity to explore – musically, lyrically – alongside his own. The result might be a different kind of journey, complete with detours and dead-ends, but it's as compelling as any he's taken so far. ★★★★★

RUPERT HOWE

Download: untitled 01 08.19.2014. | untitled 03 05.28.2013. | untitled 05 09.21.2014.

– into something rougher and tougher. Opening with the Korg-driven swamp-rock of *Kiss That Wealth Goodbye*, *Scan The Blue* oddly grafts together swaggering attitude and saucer-eyed winsomeness, showing a band as in thrall to Gallon Drunk as they are to Love. *Job Done* triggers memories of *Rollerskate Skinny*, the chunkily experimental band of Kevin Shields's brother Jimi, while *Place Your Bets* could be *Tindersticks* gone improbably baggy. Their musical sleight of hand is far from seamless, then, but there's enough spirit and guile here to suggest exmagician might not have given up the day job entirely. ★★★★★

VICTORIA SEGAL

Download: *Kiss That Wealth Goodbye* | *Job Done* | *Place Your Bets*



Everything but the kitchen sink: Kendrick Lamar digs into his musical sketchbook.

LAURA GIBSON EMPIRE BUILDER

CITY SLANG, OUT NOW

Phoenix-from-the-ashes effort from Oregon-born singer-songwriter.



The genesis of Laura Gibson's fourth album was far from straightforward: a gas explosion blew up her New York apartment

building last spring, killing two people, injuring many more and destroying all her possessions, including practically all of the work that she'd completed towards *Empire Builder*. To her credit, Gibson didn't just give up there and then but instead hooked up with members of *The Decemberists* and *Death Cab For Cutie* to recreate her lost work. The result of that rebuilding work is a delicately realised but emotionally resonant collection – reminiscent of Laura Veirs and *Dark Dark Dark* and underpinned by Gibson's sorrowful voice. She's at her best on the stately and haunting title track and the more lyrically raw *Louis* ("Did I lose another baby?/ Did I lose my mind to chemicals?"), but there isn't a song here that isn't a low-key delight. ★★★★★

PHIL MONGREDIEN

Download: *Empire Builder* | *Louis* | *Caldera*, *Oregon* | *The Last One*

ADAM GREEN ALADDIN

SNOWBALL, OUT 29 APRIL

Fairytale of New York fails to make wishes come true.

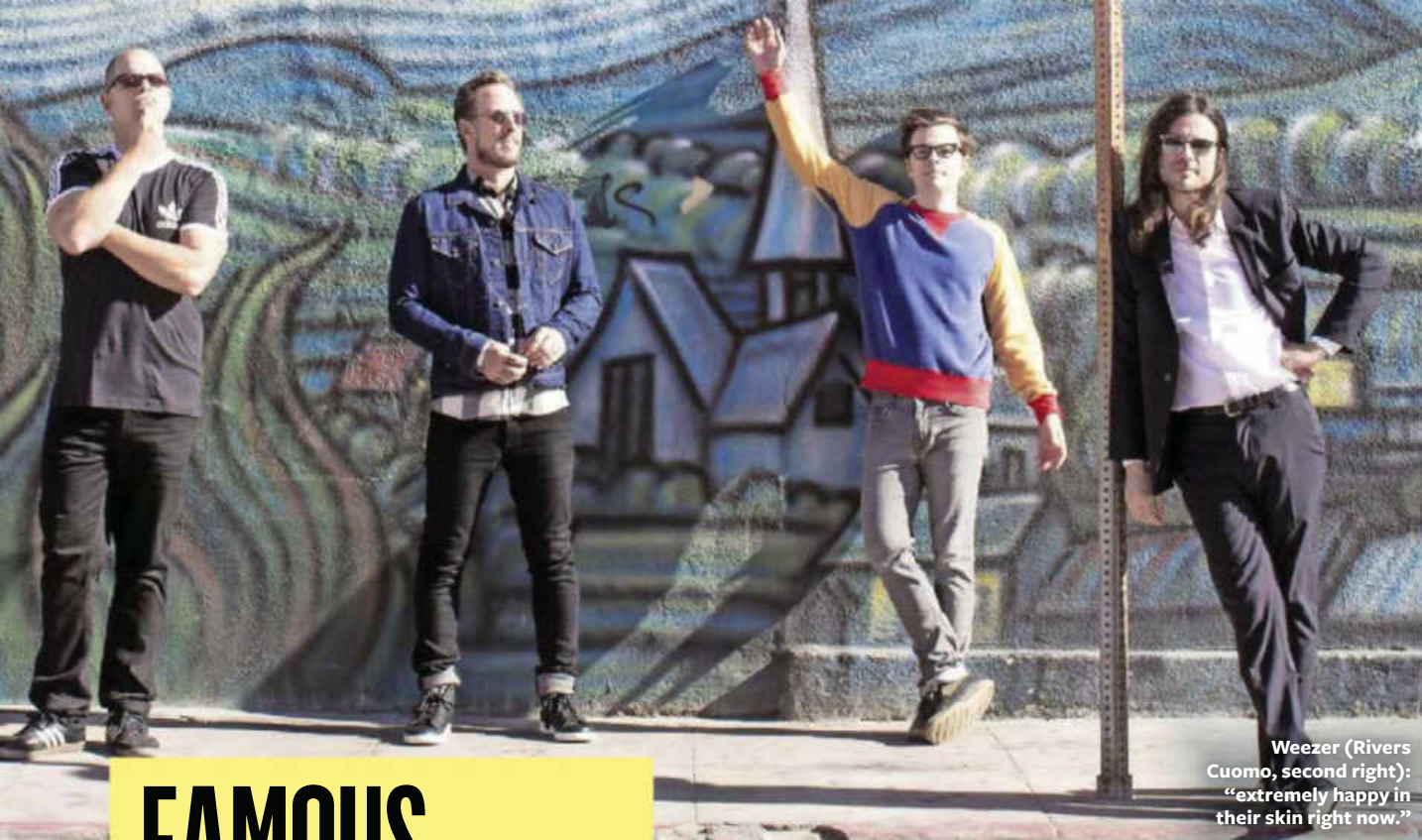


The first mention of genitalia appears within one song; the references to cocaine and needle-sharing aren't far behind.

Despite this being his ninth solo album, former *Moldy Peach* Adam Green isn't great on the maturity front – *Aladdin* could more properly be called *Peter Pan*, the work of a boy who never really grew up. It doesn't help that it comes with a sickly, stoner-friendly concept attached, the soundtrack to Green's folk-art film version of *The Arabian Nights* tale starring Macaulay Culkin, Devendra Banhart and (fittingly) *Arrested Development*'s Alia Shawkat. While Green's Lee Hazlewood-drawn-by-Robert Crumb aesthetic can be very handsome – the melancholy *Trading Our Graves* or *Life In A Videogame*, for example – the comedy mambos, Ween-like whimsy and unpromising film snippets mean the creative genie stays firmly in the lamp. ★★

VICTORIA SEGAL

Download: *Fix My Blues* | *Trading Our Graves* | *Life In A Videogame*



FAMOUS LAST NERDS

Alt-rock geeks, still riding high.



WEEZER

CRUSH/ATLANTIC, OUT NOW

It once seemed that Weezer were desperate to be anyone but themselves. By 2009, the geek-

rock kings had entered a two-album rudderless patch so frivolous it produced a party anthem with Lil Wayne. It was with a collective sigh of relief that Weezer fans greeted 2014's *Everything Will Be Alright In The End*: an album that apologised both in its lyrics and its back-to-basics musical manifesto. Faith was restored.

That return to form continues on Weezer's 10th LP (also their fourth self-titled, colour-coded release). This is Weezer gleefully enjoying operating from a blank canvas. Bookended by the sound of the washing tide and seagulls squawking, "The White Album" is a summer's daydream of crunching rock and piano-assisted anthems. Infectious melody is omnipresent.

Weezer's not-so-secret weapon remains singer/guitarist Rivers Cuomo. He's alt-rock's answer to Woody Allen, one moment chasing unobtainable girls, the next a neurotic time bomb on the verge of self-destruction. His lyrical vocabulary is unique among rock frontmen: *Thank God For Girls* alone features two references to "cannoli", the phrase "pollinate the echinacea" and an abridged retelling of the Adam and Eve story.

While there's nothing as forward-thinking as *The Futurescope Trilogy* that closed their last release, simplicity is *The White Album*'s great virtue. Weezer sound extremely happy in their own skin right now, and they're all the better for it. ★★★★★

GEORGE GARNER

Download: *Jacked Up* | *Wind In Our Sail* | *LA Girlz*

IMARHAN

IMARHAN

CITY SLANG, OUT 29 APRIL

Tinariwen-linked bluesmen offer broader Afro mix.



Blood is definitely thicker than water for this Tuareg six-piece from Tamanrasset, Southern Algeria. Their name means "the ones I care

about", referring to their tightly-knit upbringing and also, more broadly, to the importance of family and cultural ties among a people displaced across North Africa. Tinariwen's Eyadou Ag Leche (cousin of Imarhan frontman Sadam) co-wrote and produced several tracks on this debut – and opener Tarha Tadagh is business-as-usual Tinariwen-style desert melancholy. Tahabort, however, soon kicks up a rousingly Fela Kuti funk groove, and there follow divergent echoes of Saharan folk (Addounia Azdjazzaqat) and, on the band's titular tune, Algerian Rai, to vary up the ever-pleasing dusty meanderings. ★★★★★

ANDREW PERRY

Download: *Tahabort* | *Assossamagh* | *Imarhan*

THE JAYHAWKS

PAGING MR PROUST

SHAM, OUT 29 APRIL

Peter Buck-assisted return for US alt-country figureheads.



The reappearance of co-founder Marc Olson on The Jayhawks' last album, 2011's *Mockingbird Time*, was an excuse to break out the moonshine. But he didn't stick around.

Paging Mr Proust finds his estranged bandmate Gary Louris back in the driving seat, for another trip down through the American West. Retired R.E.M. guitarist Peter Buck co-produces, and there's an echo of his old group in *The Dust Of Long Dead Stars*. But on *Quiet Corners & Empty Spaces* and *Lovers Of The Sun*, Louris and co return to the familiar template of keening harmonies and heartbreaking melodies. The epic *Ace* messes up the palette with its Velvet Underground-style drone. But those raised on the Jayhawks' best work, *Tomorrow The Green Grass* and *Hollywood Town Hall*, will still go home satisfied. ★★★★★

MARK BLAKE

Download: *Quiet Corners & Empty Spaces* | *Lovers Of The Sun* | *I'll Be Your Key*

THE JOY FORMIDABLE

HITCH

SELF-RELEASED, OUT NOW

Welsh trio continue to dream of stadiums on album three.



Up until this point, The Joy Formidable – a power trio from Mold in North Wales – have always radiated a kind of slick ambition that has

rendered their epic, skyscraper rock hard to buy into. No longer signed to a major (this is self-released), album three finds them in a period of retrenchment. Not that it appears to have greatly changed their MO. Mixed by Alan Moulder (*The Killers*, *MBV*, *Smashing Pumpkins*, etc), it welds their customary melodic heft to an even more expansive set of songs (six-minute songs abound here). Although impressive on the likes of the stadium-rattling *Running Hands With The*

Night, the band actually connect more when they scale things back on the stark atmospherics of *The Gift*. Five years in, they've still to learn that less can sometimes be more. ★★★

JAMES OLDHAM

Download: *Radio Of Lips* | *Running Hands With The Night* | *The Gift*

KING GIZZARD AND THE LIZARD WIZARD

NONAGON INFINITY

HEAVENLY, OUT 29 APRIL

Aussie psych-rockers' fourth – and best – LP in 18 months.



In a pop world dominated by Kanye/Coldplay-led seriousness, it seems unlikely that a band as ridiculously christened as Melbourne's King

Gizzard will ever be more than a freaky sideshow to the mainstream. Yet, this prankster sextet have lately been churning out the most colourfully intense alt-rock around, at an alarming rate too. After recent diversions into cool jazz and acoustica, this eighth album finally trowels on their speciality – the pulsating, Super Furry Animals-style psychedelia of 2014's *Head On/Pill*, extended over a whole album. As its title implies, you can play the nine brain-liquifying tracks on *Nonagon Infinity* on permanent loop and never have to endure silence, as it thunders through Hammond-organ funkiness (*Mr Beat*), absurd stoner observations ("the universe is a machine" – *Invisible Face*) and even chugga-chugga death metal (*Road Train*). It's seamless, silly, but seriously good stuff. ★★★★★

ANDREW PERRY

Download: *Gamma Knife* | *Evil Death Roll* | *Road Train*

THE LIMIÑANAS

MALAMORE

BECAUSE MUSIC, OUT 15 APRIL

Fourth album from French duo continues the retro-cool vibes.



Since 2009 French duo The Limiñanas have occupied a hyper-stylised world of '60s Gallic cool. It's the sort of place where The Velvet

Underground might be found hanging out with Serge Gainsbourg while the Paris riots of 1968 raged outside. 2013's *Costa Blanca* broadened the pair's sonic palette to include the dusty twang of spaghetti western soundtrack and fourth LP *Malamore* widens their horizons a little further. *Garden Of Love*'s mournful pop recalls early New Order (no doubt helped by the fact that Peter Hook plays bass on it) while *Paradise Now* has shades of Mazy Star and Stereolab in its *You Only Live Twice* theme-lifting shimmer. It's hard to recall specific songs once they're over and the tracks not sung in

French puncture the atmosphere a bit (guff like, "I'm Robert Mitchum, I'm Bob Duval," must have been lost in translation), but the overall, oil lamp projector-lit vibe is an enjoyable one. ★★★

CHRIS CATCHPOLE

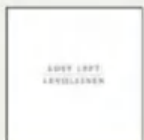
Download: *El Beach* | *Garden Of Love* | *Paradise Now*

LOST LEFT

LEVOLLINEN

HITS THE FAN, OUT 29 APRIL

Pensive Londoners' first – and last – album gets a second chance.



It's sadly appropriate that Lost Left, the trio fronted by singer and guitarist Ben Pritchard, are no longer together: their first and only album,

recorded in 2012, sounds like the work of a ghost band, reliving their past every time the sun goes down. The title might mean "calm" in Finnish, but there's a good deal of emotional turbulence beneath the surface of these songs, Young Without Loss or *Purdah* bearing traces of *My Morning Jacket* and *Yo La Tengo*'s time-and-space shifting guitars, the atmospheric grandeur of *Mogwai* and the literate, suit-wearing school of '90s indie (*Tindersticks*, *Hefner*). It's a shame there won't be any more, but Levollinen stands as a fine monument, the kind of quietly disquieting record that will always find someone to love it. ★★★

VICTORIA SEGAL

Download: *Young Without Loss* | *Purdah* | *Ferdinand Cheval*

LUST FOR YOUTH

COMPASSION

SACRED BONES, OUT NOW

Copenhagen-based outfit channel their inner new romantic.



Originally a solo project that allowed Swedish synth devotee Hannes Norrvide to explore his fascination with the darker fringes of post-

punk, Lust For Youth have since expanded to a trio, along the way embracing previously ignored concepts such as songs and melody. Here honing the bright and distinctively Nordic sound that enlivened 2014's *International*, they even flirt with becoming a pop group, albeit one wearing its '80s fixation with pride – notably on *Stardom*'s flashback to the architectural synth-pop of OMD. They're even better with Maltbe Fischer's chiming guitar to the fore, as on the Balearic mood piece *Easy Window* and shamelessly Factory-like *Better Looking Brother*, which comes off like New Order covering A-ha, even if sludgy ballad *Display* shows up the limitations of Norrvide's one-note vocals. ★★★

RUPERT HOWE

Download: *Stardom* | *Easy Window* | *Better Looking Brother*

GET BACK



Backstage was where you lived out your rock'n'roll dreams. Not any more. DAVID QUANTICK ponders how to rescue the situation...



Those were the days... Keith Moon embraces some backstage carnage.

"Backstage!" sang Gene Pitney. I forget the rest of it, but the gist was that backstage was where the action was. And historically it always has been, with dressing-room parties, antics and, of course, riders. Riders, sadly, are not people on horseback (unless you're DJing at *Manumission*, in which case they probably are) but the things people in bands want as well as (or, if you're DJing at *Manumission*, instead of) their dinner. Drinks. Snacks. Drugs. And, famously, M&M's with the brown ones taken out (that was requested by Van Halen, who put that clause in not because they were thick but because they wanted to see if the promoter had read their contract properly).

Backstage was where you met groupies and roadies. WARNING: Do not ever confuse the two. While most roadies will do anything for a vodka and lime, most groupies are reluctant to carry amplifiers to a lorry.

Backstage was where people who'd been in *Hollyoaks* were queuing up outside holding the wrong pass. Backstage was where you could meet Andy Warhol and Lemmy, Chips Channon and Oscar Wilde, Iggy Pop and Judy Finnigan, all discussing hot topics in hot tubs with, um, Hot Chip.

But that was then and this is now. Now is a time when bands meditate backstage, and play *Donko*, the wooden game with the donkey in it. Now is when U2 meet after the gig to discuss how to improve their game (new identities, space rocket). And now is when backstage is no longer fun.

Because for many, rock is a job. Live work is just that, work. And where once they gave you drugs before you auditioned for a band just so you could keep up with them, now they test you for aspirin. The medium is tedium, and so is the stadium. Even *Primal Scream*... well, let's just say "even *Primal Scream*" and leave it there.

The solution seems obvious. Put LSD in the water supply. Not to everywhere, that would be silly. Just to the fame schools, and the talent shows, and the karaoke bars. Oh all right then, and everywhere. ☒

BACKSTAGE WAS WHERE YOU COULD MEET ANDY WARHOL AND LEMMY, IGGY POP AND JUDY FINNIGAN...

ENGLAND EXPECTS



The Manics have been unveiled as the makers of Wales' Euro 2016 anthem, but who can England get? **NIALL DOHERTY** mulls it over.



Manic Street Preachers: "fiercely passionate about their national team."

There seems to have been a point towards the end of the 20th Century where the powers that be got together and decided that the UK had made enough half-decent anthems for its national football teams and that everything from hereon in should have the quality control of a bootlegger outside a gig selling T-shirts made from Post-it notes. After the mid-'90s glory patch of Three Lions (sorry Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) and Vindaloo (sorry Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), a supergroup featuring Echo & The Bunnymen, Space, the Spice Girls and Ocean Colour Scene got together to make England's song for World Cup 1998 and in one fell swoop cursed football songs forever. All of a sudden, getting to do the official anthem was more like a rehab centre for pop stars who'd fallen off the planet. The Farm got to do one. Embrace got to do one. **Chris Kamara** got to do one.

THE FARM GOT TO DO ONE. EMBRACE GOT TO DO ONE. CHRIS KAMARA GOT TO DO ONE.

Perhaps the fact that the Manic Street Preachers are doing the official Wales song will usher in a new era of the football song (I hope the Manics' B-side is the live version of when they changed the lyrics of Everything Must Go to "Bobby Gould Must Go" during Gould's wonky reign

as manager of the Welsh side). The Manics are a great choice for the Wales song, but also an easy one because they are as fiercely passionate about their national team as they are about their music. How could England match it? Noel Gallagher would be an obvious choice, but it's difficult to see how someone as droll as the ex-Oasis guitarist wouldn't accidentally-on-purpose write a song about how he'd rather see his beloved Manchester City triumph instead.

I think there are two choices: either get a feisty rabble such as Slaves to write a raucous Wetherspoons-y singalong or ask Radiohead to re-do their rejected Bond song as a footy theme. It's called Spectre, so they could change the title to (England) Expects, Yeah, add an EDM stomp to the middle and get Harry Kane and Daniel Sturridge to do a rap over the end. Sorted. Back of the net.

MELT YOURSELF DOWN

LAST EVENINGS ON EARTH

THE LEAF LABEL, OUT 29 APRIL

Jazz crew fire up second global dance party.



Named after an album by post-punk livewire James White, jazz saxophonist Pete Wareham's forward-thinking outfit have

proved equally tricky to classify, as a result earning themselves the ungainly designation "jazz punk". What that leaves out, though, is the band's longstanding connection to world music and the contribution of Mauritian vocalist and guitarist Kushal Gaya, whose feral yowl is given a central role on this follow-up to the group's self-titled 2013 debut. And despite the group's avant-garde leanings, Wareham has always promoted Melt Yourself Down as a dance band and it's the roiling, stomping rhythms that really take hold here, Dot To Dot evoking an Afrobeat Battles, Jump The Fire splicing grime beats and triumphal horns, and Bharat Mata taking Bollywood on a funk-infused joyride. Only the occasional squalling, free-jazz meltdown gets in the way of letting the good times roll. ★★ ★

RUPERT HOWE

Download: Dot To Dot | Jump The Fire | Bharat Mata

MODERAT III

MONKEYTOWN/MUTE, OUT NOW

Berlin trio's sensibly titled third album mixes the ethereal with the hardcore.



Moderat are a marriage of two German electro artists, menacing duo Modeselektor (Gernot Bronsert and Sebastian

Szary) and the altogether more ambient Sascha Ring (aka Apparat). They're a stomach-tightening live proposition and, in the studio, they splice the best of both worlds. It often happens on the same track, hence Animal Trails, where a beautifully dreamy interlude suddenly explodes into hardcore techno and the relatively gentle closer, Ethereal, where Ring's vocals glide over Krautrocky electro wibbles. While Finder is as relentless as they come and Intruder punches harder than Chase & Status, The Fool details life in a court during the Middle Ages interestingly enough and there's subtle beauty in Eating Hooks. Their last attempt at world domination was derailed when Ring was seriously injured in a motorcycle accident. This time around they'll be harder to stop. ★★ ★ ★

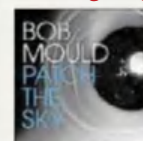
JOHN AIZLEWOOD

Download: Animal Trails | Finder | Eating Hooks | The Fool

BOB MOULD PATCH THE SKY

MERGE, OUT NOW

Alt-rock lynchpin is getting older, and he's getting angrier.



A decade ago, it seemed as if Bob Mould had reached the end of what the Hüsker Dü and Sugar founder's memoir calls "the trail of rage and

melody." He mellowed, made electronic music and talked about no longer touring with an electric band. Then, in 2008, he returned to playing guitar-heavy punk, and each of his subsequent five albums has been even more furious than the one before. On most of Patch the Sky, Mould expresses his darkest emotions in ways that make you want to shout along: Voices In My Head and The End Of Things have catchy choruses but also furious guitar solos. But as the album gets progressively darker, the melodies become less cathartic. On the final track, Monument, Mould sings of, "The time that would never die/To keep ourselves alive" as guitar feedback swirls around him like black sheets of rain. ★★ ★ ★

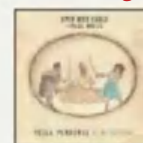
ROBERT LEVINE

Download: Voices In My Head | The End Of Things | Pray For Rain | Monument

OPEN MIKE EAGLE & PAUL WHITE HELLA PERSONAL FILM FESTIVAL

MELLO MUSIC GROUP, OUT NOW

US alt-rapper meets UK beatmaker for some lengthily titled fun.



The fabled home of Los Angeles' alternative hip-hop scene, Project Blowed has created a school of MCing somewhere between rap

and spoken word. Its wordy maximalism often sits alongside music that sounds more like an afterthought than driving force – something Open Mike Eagle has evinced across his numerous albums, both collaborative and solo. So teaming up with Paul White, a London producer with a knack for making wonky, left-field beats with tangy flavours, makes Hella Personal Film Festival notably less chewy than the likes of 2010 album Unapologetic Art Rap. The ambition is still there, with each song conceived as its own mini-movie, but even a forbidding title such as The Curse Of Hypervigilance (In Politics, Romance And Cohabitation) turns out to be a whistling breeze, while Check To Check is a skittish slapstick joy. ★★ ★ ★

STEVE YATES

Download: Check To Check | Admitting The Endorphin Addition | Protectors Of The Heat | Dive Bar Support Group

SANTANA IV

THIRTY TIGERS, OUT 15 APRIL

Latin jazz-rockers pick up where they left off in 1971.



Guitar maestro Carlos Santana disbanded this highly rated line-up of his band after 1971's Santana III. Two of the dream team, guitarist

Neal Schon and keyboard player Gregg Rolie, formed Glee-approved soft rockers Journey, who, like later versions of Santana, disguised their musical chops with radio-friendly choruses. This reunion is, essentially, the antithesis of Supernatural, the 30-million seller that returned Santana to the charts in 1999. It's easily five songs too long, but the likes of Yambu and Shake It reprise the finger-bleeding solos and chattering rhythms of Santana III's Batuka and Toussaint L'Overture. Moonlighting Isley Brother, Ronald, adds a sweet soul vocal to Love Makes The World Go Round. But for the most part this is a nostalgic flashback to Santana's golden age; one for imaginary guitarists and air conga players everywhere. ★★

MARK BLAKE

Download: Yambu | Shake It | Anywhere You Want To Go | Caminando | Love Makes The World Go Round

EDWARD SHARPE AND THE MAGNETIC ZEROS

PERSON A

COMMUNITY MUSIC, OUT 15 APRIL

Fourth album from Californian folk bohemians.



With Alex Ebert as their messianic ringleader, this 10-piece have spent the last decade cultivating an image

as a sort of ramshackle version of Arcade Fire. However, while their happy-clappy vibe – which was captured on 2013's Grammy-winning tour film Big Easy Express – has won them a cult following, it was dealt a blow with the unceremonious sacking of co-vocalist Jade Castrinos in 2014. Recorded in, and heavily influenced by, New Orleans, their fourth album finds Ebert determined to prove a point. “You got to get uncomfortable!” he rasps on the hypnotic gospel of Uncomfortable, while diversions into psych-pop (Somewhere), gypsy-folk (Let It Down), ragtime (Perfect Time) and brassy Creole boogie (Hot Coals, Wake Up The Sun) add spice to their sonic bouillabaisse even without Ebert's vocal acrobatics. Their most exceptional record yet. ★★★★★

PAUL MOODY

Download: Hot Coals | Wake Up The Sun | Uncomfortable | Somewhere | Let It Down



Katy B: “glittering disco ballads are out; thumping house beats are back in.”

SWEET SURRENDER

South Londoner wants us to party like it's 1998.



KATY B HONEY

RINSE/VIRGIN EMI, OUT 29 APRIL

Katy B was a leading light in dubstep's emergence into the mainstream. After close affiliation with the South London pirate radio station Rinse FM, her first single, Katy On A Mission, hit the Top 5 in 2010. A string of ever-poppier hits followed but her last album, 2014's Little Red, was about growing up and getting home at a decent hour. It had the sheen of labour about it, as though it had been wrung out of her rather than tumbling into being the way her debut did. Here she heads back to the dancefloor, with a new mission that she says is to “remind people what I [am] about”. These songs have been specifically made for club gigs – and she seems right at home.

Glittering disco ballads are out and thumping house beats are back in. Each song is

a love letter to club culture, and the sultry production comes courtesy of no fewer than 21 collaborators. Everyone is on this guestlist, from house darling Hannah Wants to Craig David, who barrels in like the '90s never ended on the Major Lazer-produced Who Am I.

The yearning of So Far Away comes with a beat that will make you want to put on a bucket hat and do things with your arms you've not done since 1998, while Katy B simultaneously seduces (Honey) and demands to be seduced (Chase Me) before picking the club over her lover anyway (on the addictive single Calm Down). Her voice holds it all together until the final track, Honey (Outro), where she and grime MC Novelist seem to float above the music, reflecting on what they do (baring their souls on dance tracks) and why they do it (to escape the pain of life, duh). This is an album you need to be enveloped by – the louder it is, the better it sounds. ★★

KATE SOLOMON

Download: Honey | Lose Your Head | Calm Down

VOICE OF DISSENT

The ex-Antony Hegarty tackles the Big Issues, in an electro style.



ANOHNI

HOPELESSNESS

ROUGH TRADE, OUT 6 MAY

Things have moved on since we last encountered the lynchpin voice of Antony and the Johnsons. Having always

identified as transgender, the singer has adopted the “spirit name” Anohni and will henceforth be using female gender pronouns.

It’s not the only change. In contrast to 2010’s strings and piano-based *Swanlights*, *Hopelessness* brings immaculate, synth-pop megavistas and atmospheric electronic miniatures courtesy of co-producers Hudson Mohawke and Oneohtrix Point Never. There’s also bold new thematic and lyrical candour: this is a Big Issues protest album, implicating the listener while addressing America’s addiction to violence, misogyny, erosion of freedom and most importantly, ecological destruction.

At its best, this strange, hi-tech, sensual pop music is stunning: Devil’s advocate lead track 4 Degrees (the amount by which the planet is predicted to warm by 2100) matches visions of a burning, dying world with a CinemaScope epic suited to mass dance synchronisation. Bizarre and unnerving, the grooving Drone Bomb Me merges love and death with tragic tenderness. True, some lyrics seem less considered, but even when Obama beasts the outgoing US President for the murky, imperfect pragmatisms of government – “When you were elected, the world cried for joy... like children we believed” – it’s sonically alluring, as she ululates like a Mongolian throat singer over the clicks and whirrs of replicant R&B.

It’s probable that a voice of such Nina Simone-like lightness and power could give a B&Q receipt startling emotional heft. That said, *Hopelessness* shows the singer imbued with a new spirit, openness and clarity – one that’s anything but hopeless. ★★★★★

IAN HARRISON

Download: 4 Degrees | Drone Bomb Me

SHONEN KNIFE

ADVENTURE

DAMNABLY, OUT NOW

Japanese cult legends stray from formula, but not too far.



Like many of rock’s all-time greats (AC/DC, Motörhead, Ramones), Shonen Knife laugh in the face of “artistic progression”. It’s no



Anohni: takes a call on her dog and bone.

coincidence that Adventure, the Osaka trio’s 19th album in a 35-year career, sounds like each of those bands at various points. Still led by founder Naoko Yamano with her sister Atsuko returning on drums, they do lean away somewhat from the buzzsaw pop-punk which made them favourites of Kurt Cobain, and towards streamlined ’70s FM rock (the artwork, fittingly, looks like a Boston or Journey album sleeve), as well as new wave power pop in the vein of The Only Ones and The Flamin’ Groovies, with a few interludes of Byrds/Big Star jangle. But don’t be fooled by such mellow moments: it’s pretty much a nailed-on certainty that in concert, every track will be given Shonen Knife’s full-throttle CBeebies-meets-CBGBs treatment. ★★★★★

SIMON PRICE

Download: Rock’n’Roll T-Shirt | Dog Fight | Iml (Emoji) | Cotton Candy Clouds

SPECTRES

DEAD

SONIC CATHEDRAL, OUT NOW

Radical remix album brings little to the party.



Taking their cue from Mogwai’s Kicking A Dead Pig, a 1998 project that featured guest remixers offering radical reworkings of tracks

from Young Team, Spectres invited 13 artists to deconstruct last year’s Sonic Youth-indebted debut, *Dying*, with the instruction “kill our songs”. They’ve certainly stuck rigidly to that remit: most of these versions bear only the scantest similarity to the originals. Hookworms remove the drums and bass from The Sky Of All Places, leaving just a distorted vocal and droning guitar noise; Ride’s Andy Bell gives Sea Of Trees an Animal-Collective-go-baggy makeover. This Purgatory, meanwhile,

becomes either a disorienting techno clatter or a blissed-out ambient work, depending on whether you choose Blood Music or Stuart Braithwaite's take on it. Tellingly, the most enjoyable track is Robert Hampson's Mirror. It's also the one that sticks most closely to the original. If it ain't broke... ★★
PHIL MONGREDIEN

Download: Mirror (Robert Hampson mix)

GWEN STEFANI

THIS IS WHAT THE TRUTH FEELS LIKE

INTERSCOPE, OUT NOW

No Doubt's frontwoman returns with first solo album in 10 years.



With admirable honesty, Gwen Stefani has made no secret of the fact that This Is What The Truth Feels Like is a break-up record, inspired by her divorce last year from Gavin Rossdale after 13 years of marriage. Emotionally fragile ballad Used To Love You, or the slow-burn drama of Asking 4 It, guest-starring Fetty Wap, show off her vulnerable side, but it's clear Stefani isn't one to wallow, surrounding herself with high-grade songwriters (Stargate, JR Rotem) to create a record that's as shiny and fierce as armour. The over-sauced, finger-wagging Naughty might take the joyful retribution too far in the panto direction ("you tried to sneak it/ hide and seek it") but I Will Survive update Me Without You and joyful dancefloor rebirth Rare prove that Stefani has lost none of her pop spirit. ★★

VICTORIA SEGAL

Download: Used To Love You

SUNSET SONS

VERY RARELY SAY DIE

FRENCH EXIT, OUT NOW

France-based Anglo-Australian surfers' debut.



Once a covers band cheekily christened The Cheerleaders and featuring former Motorettes drummer Jed Laidlaw, the

testosterone-fuelled Sunset Sons often base their touring schedule around their surfing, but they don't sound like surfers. For this debut they swapped the beaches of Hossegor in France for Nashville, where they hired Kings Of Leon/James Bay producer Jacquire King and set about making their wittily titled debut. Their chief asset is singer Rory Williams's cracked rasp and its battle against his own keyboards. For all that and the frenetic kitchen-sink climax to Remember and their keenness for a wallowing chorus, these 13 tub-thumping anthems are infused with a funk undertow on Tick Tock and, more often, a deft, spring-heeled approach to Americana. They're on their way. ★★

JOHN AIZLEWOOD

Download: Remember | Know My Name | September Song | Loa

BEN WATT

FEVER DREAM

UNMADE ROAD, OUT 8 APRIL

Late-career purple patch continues for ex-Everything But The Girl man.



Ben Watt released his second solo LP (Hendra, 2014) 31 years after his debut, so the arrival of Fever Dream just two years later suggests

someone who's tapped into a wellspring of creativity that shows no sign of drying up. With trusty wingman Bernard Butler on board once more providing guitar squalls and howls, plus Boston singer-songwriter Marissa Nadler and Hiss Golden Messenger's MC Taylor, Fever Dream's AOR and folk stylings see Watt picking over the bones of his life, ruminating on such themes as love, loss and family in a wry, wise and unsentimental manner. It's nicely summed up in Faces Of My Friends' opening couplet:

"a 12-hour drunken heart to heart/ Is as good a place as anywhere to start." The ex-EBTG man is quietly, confidently forging a reputation as a mid-life storyteller of real stature. ★★

MATT YATES

Download: Faces Of My Friends | Women's Company | Bricks And Wood

She will survive:
Gwen Stefani tackles her divorce album.



WOODS

CITY SUN EATER IN THE RIVER OF LIGHT

WOODSIST, OUT 8 APRIL

US folk institution deliver their best yet.



Although little known in the UK, Brooklyn's Woods are something of an institution in the US. Outsiders in every sense, they are beholden to no

one, releasing their rustic, lo-fi, psych-folk through their own label and putting on their own annual festival in Big Sur. That has led to an impressive productivity (this is their ninth album in 10 years) but a rather niche level of recognition in the outside world. This album attempts to change that. The production values have been upped and the band have augmented their sound with flashes of Motown and Krautrock. Its warmth and charm is best displayed on the easy-rolling melodics of Creature Comfort or the pedal-steel of Morning Light. Fans of Real Estate, in particular, will be in ecstasy. ★★

JAMES OLDHAM

Download: Morning Light

WRAY

HYPATIA

COMMUNICATING VESSELS, OUT NOW

Birmingham, Alabama shoegazing trio's second album.



For all that shoegazing was seemingly a very British phenomenon, it has acquired cultdom in the US. Wray have the shoegazing bug in

excelsis and while Shiva and Giant suggest they're familiar with Revolver's back catalogue, they take the American desert road and leaven their introspection with some genuinely pretty tunes, not least Hypatia itself. Singer David Brown's appealing vocals are way back in the mix and David Swartzell's layered guitars don't always sizzle, but when Wray hit their stride on May 23rd, they do windswept and intricate with equal gusto. In the finest shoegazing tradition, they're short on glitter, but Hypatia is something to build on. ★★

JOHN AIZLEWOOD

Download: May 23rd | Hypatia

MUST BUY

The essential new albums of the last few months

PJ HARVEY

THE HOPE SIX DEMOLITION PROJECT

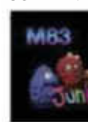


Tackling nothing less than global military conflict and US government policy, PJ Harvey's ninth

album is her most ambitious to date. The end result is a confident and inventive heavyweight tour de force.

M83

JUNK

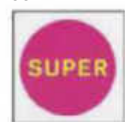


Anthony Gonzalez, aka M83, has built a reputation for maximalist electro-pop, but this time

around he's feeling nostalgic, wrapping up a host of MOR guilty pleasures in one deeply uncool, uncoolly deep, magnifique package.

PET SHOP BOYS

SUPER

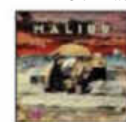


Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe continue to hit the creative bullseye after 35 years

together on this, the second part of a purely electronic trilogy that takes in showtunes, Eurodisco, house, techno and uplift in abundance.

ANDERSON . PAAK

MALIBU



He was the breakout star of Dr Dre's Compton, but Paak's major-label debut is more a soul album

than a rap one. Rich and dazzling, it brings to mind Frank Ocean, Erykah Badu, even Stevie Wonder, and marks the arrival of a serious talent.

CROWNING GLORY

Antmusic for sex people! Lavish repackaging of post-punk imagineers' breakthrough album.



ADAM AND THE ANTS KINGS OF THE WILD FRONTIER

SONY, OUT NOW

As 1980 began, things were looking bleak

for Adam Ant. Drummed out of his own band by manager Malcolm McLaren, who poached the other members for dubious pop project Bow Wow Wow, the singer had to rustle up a new gang. The Londoners' 1979 debut, *Dirk Wears White Sox*, had been a substantial post-punk cult hit, but art-school renegade Ant, born Stuart Goddard, craved more. He regrouped, cannily recruiting guitarist Marco Pirroni, bassist Kevin Mooney and most strikingly, two drummers, Merrick (producer Chris Hughes) and Terry Lee Miall, who ramped up the hammering Burundi attack of the band's new

songs. *Kings Of The Wild Frontier* pitched them into the proper charts, the music's novel thwack and yelp embodied by Ant's swashbuckling beauty.

Yet despite their Top Of The Pops appearances and Top 10 singles – a trend that would accelerate with third LP *Prince Charming* – 1980's *Kings Of The Wild Frontier* was a curious

mainstream choice. A deeply and wonderfully peculiar record, it's a spasm of obsessive energy, driven by the relentless thump of its internal logic. The cartoony clothing broadened their appeal, but it's ultimately an outsider's rallying cry that stands for little but its own right to exist. It burns with the absolute conviction that it can will a movement into being. "Get off your knees and hear the insect prayer," whoops Ant over the unhinged synth-pop fibrillations of *Don't Be Square (Be There)*, a song which generates slogan after slogan for their arthropod crusade: "Music for a future age!"

"You may not like it now but you will!" "Sexmusic for antpeople!" Maybe it was because Ant had his first band ripped away, but on this record he is desperate to unite and fight, aiming his message at the quivering antennae of the odd and marginal. In a cruel world, there's safety in numbers.

Recorded in isolation at Rockfield Studios in Wales, *Kings Of The Wild Frontier* bounces between the joyfully idiosyncratic and the disconcertingly heavy. The rumpus of the title track is a transgressive Maurice Sendak coronation party: "A new Royal family, a wild nobility, we are the family." *Dog Eat Dog's* bandit-country land-grab is a fierce pop statement of intent; "Antmusic"'s glam-rock manifesto demands an oath of exclusive loyalty from the listener – "Unplug the jukebox and do us all a favour". If it rampages through the musical dressing-up box – Jolly Roger's sinister shanty, the Wild West menace of *Los Rancheros* – there's also real disquiet on the horror-film formation

of *Ants Invasion*, or the ominous surf-twang of *Killer In The Home*, where Ant sings, "Deep inside, Geronimo is tearing me apart", his recurrent fascination with Native American people not entirely the stuff of ignorant headaddress appropriation, but the expression of a feeling that a better way of life had been lost.

Alongside the B-sides (including the fabulously disdainful *Press Darlings*), a recording of a 1981 concert in Chicago and Ant's own entertaining track by track, this golden boxset contains a packet of repro memorabilia. There's a replica of their fancub membership card and across the top, it just says "Antwarrior". You were never supposed to be a fan, but a recruit: 36 years later, that call to arms is still impossible to resist. ★★ ★

VICTORIA SEGAL

Download: "Antmusic" | *Kings Of The Wild Frontier* | *Don't Be Square (Be There)*

IT'S A SPASM OF OBSESSIVE ENERGY, DRIVEN BY THE RELENTLESS THUMP OF ITS INTERNAL LOGIC.

Adam Ant in 1980: "desperate to unite and fight."



Glam Racket

Three more from punks who embraced pop...

Billy Idol

Billy Idol CHRYSALIS, 1982



Larger-than-life rock'n'rolling from the bleach-blond, leather-wearing former singer

of London punks Generation X, featuring the overwrought gothic rumble of *White Wedding*. ★★ ★

ABC

How To Be A... Zillionaire! MERCURY, 1985



Martin Fry went for style over content on album three, rounding up fashion plate

Eden and bald-headed David Yarritu purely for their striking That's All, Folks! looks. ★★ ★

Sigue Sigue Sputnik

Flaunt It PARLOPHONE, 1986



Formed by Generation X's Tony James, these glam-racketeers came on like

computer-age avatars, famously selling advertising space between songs on their lurid debut. ★★ ★



RYAN ADAMS

HEARTBREAKER

UNIVERSAL, OUT MAY TBC

His first – and arguably best – album.



With volatile alt-country act Whiskeytown spluttering to a halt in 2000, frontman Ryan Adams ducked into the studio for two weeks to

cut his first solo LP. Even the most ardent fans of his old band would have been taken aback by the depth and maturity of the 25-year-old's songs on *Heartbreaker*. Highway 61 Revisited revisit To Be Young (Is To Be Sad, Is To Be High) and the Stones-like *Shakedown On 9th Street* aside, it's a collection of aching, stripped-back ballads delivered with world-weary pathos and wit. Follow-up *Gold* may have made him a bigger star but *Heartbreaker* remains the strongest argument for Adams's gift as a songwriter. ★★★★★

CHRIS CATCHPOLE

Download: My Winding Wheel | Oh My Sweet Carolina | Call Me On Your Way Back Home

PHIL COLLINS

HELLO, I MUST BE GOING! ★★★★★ DANCE INTO THE LIGHT ★★★★★

WARNER ATLANTIC, OUT NOW

His second and sixth solo albums.



Phil Collins's unlikely rehabilitation has been a peculiar business indeed, but as the hip-hop glitterati who contributed to the 2001

tribute, *Urban Renewal*, knew, there was always more beyond the cheesy hits. *Hello, I Must Be Going!* (1982) was a darker version of its predecessor *Face Value* and Collins used drums as others used lead guitars. In 1996, the mostly jaunty *Dance Into The Light* found him free of Genesis for a while. By his commercial standards it struggled, chiefly because he couldn't get a proper hit single despite trying six times. Twenty years on, it's aged remarkably well and *Wear My Hat* injects just the right amount of cynicism vis-à-vis fame. Both releases have an extra disc: *Hello*'s is wholly live, while *Dance*'s comprises live tracks, demos and B-sides.

JOHN AIZLEWOOD

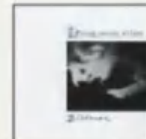
Download: I Don't Care Anymore | Wear My Hat | Dance Into The Light

FLYING SAUCER ATTACK

DISTANCE/CHORUS/FURTHER

DOMINO, OUT NOW

Transcendent three-album bundle from early-'90s alt-pop should-have-beens.



Bristol's Flying Saucer Attack are one of the most underrated alt-pop groups Britain has ever produced – and the evidence for this

outlandish claim is scattered all across these three brilliant albums. At heart, all these 26 tracks of 20-plus-year-old material are the same piece of music made over and over again. Dave Pearce (resolutely *not* the be-hatted Dance Anthems cornball) creates an utterly beautiful folky, acoustic piece, then tips an industrial amount of radioactive noise over the top of it. Sometimes it's ravenous feedback, sometimes it's cavernous reverb, sometimes it's glorious droning waves, sometimes – like on 1995's epic *To The Shore* – it's all three at once. FSA are always transcendent, always uplifting, always euphoric and these records provide the perfect antidote to the traditional '90s Britpop history. ★★★★★

ROB FITZPATRICK

Download: *To The Shore* | *Light In The Evening* | *Rainstorm Blues*

JOHN FOX

21ST CENTURY: A MAN, A WOMAN AND A CITY

METAMATIC, OUT 6 MAY

UK techno-pop overlord's post-millennial best bits.



As the prime mover of Ultravox! (pre-Midge Ure and circa punk), John Foxx was second only to Brian Eno as British electronica's

founding father. As such, everyone from Gary Numan and Depeche Mode through to contemporary disciples such as LoneLady and Gazelle Twin have queued to touch his raiment's hem. The absolute clincher of his tech-divinity is that, in the years since Y2K, an era of synth-pop super-abundance, this enigmatic Lancastrian pioneer, now 67, continues to make it better than just about anyone else. This noughties-spanning sampler demonstrates the breadth of his excellence, at once incorporating Evergreen's early Depeche-style poppy exuberance, Tides' ineffably Kraftwerk-esque motorik majesty and Evidence's stately, distorto-soulful experimentalism. In the immaculate future he's been soundtracking these past 40 years, Foxx has been Number 1 all along. ★★★★★

ANDREW PERRY

Download: *Evergreen* | *Catwalk* | *Tides*

FELA RANSOME KUTI AND HIS KOOLA LOBITOS

HIGHLIFE-JAZZ AND AFRO-SOUL (1963-1969)

KNITTING FACTORY, OUT NOW

The Nigerian magus's pre-Afrobeat years compiled over three discs.



You might think after Alex Gibney's 2014 documentary, the Fela! musical and Knitting Factory's extensive reissue programme,

there wouldn't be much left of Fela Kuti's extraordinary life and music to pick over. This decent 39-track round-up of the Afrobeat pioneer's early years begs to differ. After a four-year stint learning trumpet at London's Trinity College Of Music, Kuti returned to Nigeria in 1963 to play with Koola Lobitos, his vehicle for a new genre of music he "dreamt up – jazz super-imposed on highlife". So this melodious – but still rough around the edges – hybrid, also tinged with Latin, R&B and calypso, is the sound of Kuti attempting to find his feet and realise that vision. On slow jam Amaechi's Blues a ponderous trumpet parps, while Omo Ejo is an exuberant blend of skittering percussion and brass stabs, though neither gets close to Fela's benchmark influences, Miles Davis and James Brown. The sax, propulsive rhythms and political rhetoric were to come later, after an epiphanic trip to the States in 1969, but this is essentially where Kuti first located his very own infectious groove. ★★★★★

SIMON MCEWEN

Download: *Awo* | *V.C. 7* | *Omo Ejo* | *Ololufe*

SKELETAL FAMILY

ETERNAL: SINGLES/ALBUMS/RARITIES/BBC SESSIONS/LIVE/DEMOS (1982-2015)

CHERRY RED, OUT NOW

Goth-rock pioneers go from taut and dangerous to howlingly bad.



The promise of Skeletal Family – and their early-'80s goth contemporaries such as Sex Gang Children, Specimen and Alien Sex

Fiend – was that this was a whole new approach to making music. As tribal in sound as it was in look, the bands (and their fans) were transgressive and theatrical – and in a pre-indie world, inspiration was taken from David Bowie, The Cramps and the darker end of the electro-pop scene. Tracks such as *So Sure*, *Black Ju Ju* and *Promised Land* sound taut and dangerous, but goth itself was, ironically, a dead end as the howlingly bad 1986 live version of *Knockin' On Heaven's Door* – with Andrew Eldritch (Sisters Of Mercy) and ex-bandmate Wayne Hussey (The Mission) – proves with clinical precision. Eternal is a fans-only backwater for sure, but it's loaded with period charm. ★★★★★

ROB FITZPATRICK

Download: *Black Ju Ju* | *So Sure* | *Promised Land*

TRICKY

PRE-MILLENNIUM TENSION

CHERRY RED, OUT NOW

Bristol maverick buries the trip-hop tag on hypnotically dark second album.



Adrian "Tricky" Thaws's 1995 debut album *Maxinquaye* placed him firmly at the head of trip-hop's coffee table. Irritated by that

pigeonholing, he accelerated into a space all of his own on this 1996 follow-up. It's a tense, claustrophobic place that draws hardcore hip-hop, industrial rock, drum'n'bass and his and Martina Topley-Bird's dis-harmonies around spasmodic beats built from spectral whispers, metallic clatters and backwards guitars. The hooks are still there, you just have to feel your way through the gloaming to get to them. From the twisted funk of *Christiansands* and paranoia ballad *Makes Me Wanna Die* to an agitated cover of Eric B & Rakim's *Lyrics Of Fury*, *Pre-Millennium Tension* is as mesmerising as it is discomfiting. Wisely, this re-mastering stays faithful to the murkiness and throws in two solid remixes and three B-sides. ★★★★★

MATT MASON

Download: *Christiansands* | *Makes Me Wanna Die* | *Tricky Kid* | *Devil's Helper*

MUST BUY

The essential reissues of the last few months

SIUXSIE & THE BANSHEES

CLASSIC ALBUM SELECTION

VOLUME TWO UMC



Siouxsie Sioux's goth rockers kept on changing and kept on challenging, and never adhered to any strict edict laid down in the punk era. This set covers their releases from the mid-'80s to their split in 1996.

METALLICA

RIDE THE LIGHTNING BLACKENED



The godfathers of thrash metal's second album revealed a band able to temper their own ferocity.

Now reissued with a host of extras, it stands not only as Metallica's finest, but also the very pillar upon which much of modern metal is built.

MICHAEL JACKSON

OFF THE WALL EPIC



Jacko's brilliant, exciting, innovative fifth solo LP was the one that made him a star in his own right.

Packed with memorable songs, it was a musical and artistic statement that captured the mood of the times – and, best of all, you could dance to it.

DAVID BOWIE

BOWIE AT THE BEEB PARLOPHONE/BBC



This four-disc vinyl LP version of 2000's BBC sessions box offers a noisy, accelerated journey

through Bowieworld between '68 and '72. Performed by a band who know the clock's ticking, this is Bowie at his raw and unpolished best.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

CLOSE TO THE NOISE FLOOR

CHERRY RED, OUT 29 APRIL

Four-CD boxset of pioneering Brit electronica, 1975-1984.



For a moment, after punk fizzled out and before synths belonged to nightclubbers, electronic music was bedroom weird and tinnily grim.

The nation was stuffed with one-man bands making JG Ballard tributes on one-off singles that emulated Cabaret Voltaire's tape snarl and Throbbing Gristle's concrete horror. Former Sounds and Q writer Dave Henderson has collected 61 tracks of lost brilliance, from names such as Bourbonese Qualk and British Standard Unit to acts who would later become pop stars, such as The Human League and Blancmange (whose sad woozy instrumental *Holiday Camp* could almost have fitted on *Low*). The tracks flow in and out of each other, "chimp-chimp" drum machines and whumping synths, making a grey, wistful music which sounds more like its era than punk ever did. ★★★★★

DAVID QUANTICK

Download: *God With Us* – Bourbonese Qualk | *Holiday Camp* – Blancmange | *Being Boiled* – The Human League

VARIOUS ARTISTS

PUNK 45: CHAOS IN THE CITY OF ANGELS AND DEVILS

SOUL JAZZ, OUT NOW

Lovingly-compiled comp documenting LA's much-overlooked punk scene.

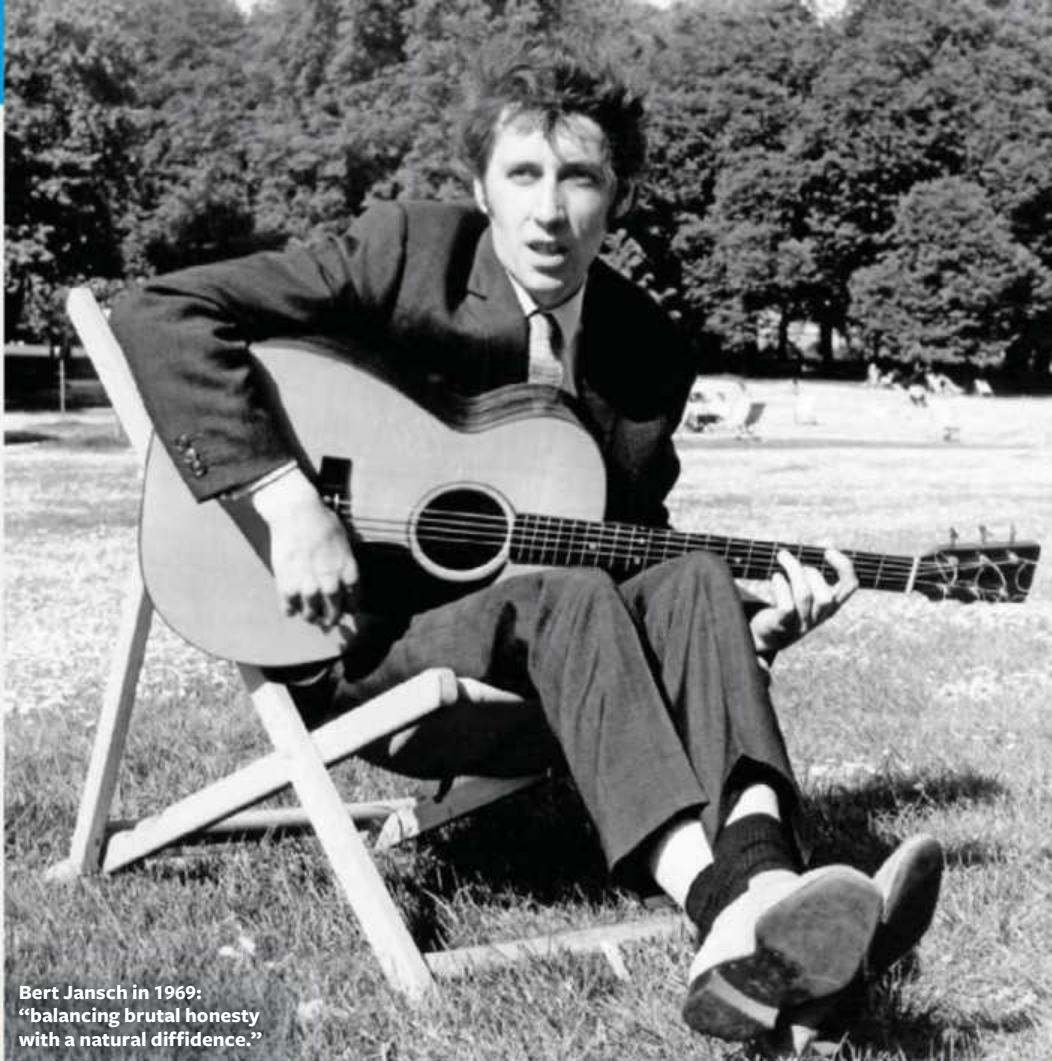


Though verbosely subtitled "Hollywood From X To Zero & Hardcore On The Beaches: Punk In Los Angeles 1977-81",

this sixth instalment of Soul Jazz's excellent Punk 45 series still serves as a neat reminder that the West Coast punks had just as much snotty spirit as their more celebrated – and more knowing – New York CBGB counterparts. Over 22 tracks (plus lavish 64-page booklet), the case is briskly made (just five songs breach the three-minute mark) by the likes of X, Iggy And The Stooges, The Weirdos, The Germs and The Urinals, the latter's I'm White And Middle Class as thrillingly inane as the Ramones at their most comical. While second generation hardcore bands such as Circle Jerks (*What's Your Problem*) and The Adolescents (*Amoeba*) mix in skate and surf influences, The Deadbeats go so far as making Brainless sound like early Devo covering Captain Beefheart. Satisfyingly raw, nihilistic, exhilarating and with a healthy side-order of humour – just how all the best punk should be served. ★★★★★

SIMON McEWEN

Download: *I Got A Right* – Iggy And The Stooges | *Bloodstains* – Agent Orange | *Final Ride* – The Deadbeats



Bert Jansch in 1969: "balancing brutal honesty with a natural diffidence."

PLUCKY MAN

Scottish folk guitar virtuoso's fifth, sixth and seventh albums get the reissue treatment.



BERT JANSCH

NICOLA ★★ ★

BIRTHDAY BLUES ★★ ★ ★

ROSEMARY LANE ★★ ★

SANCTUARY, OUT 22 APRIL

Bert Jansch's first label boss, Nat Joseph, once described the Scottish folk guitarist as "the most untogether act I have ever seen". Jansch, who died of cancer in 2011, was contrary and brilliant but not cut out for showbusiness. Johnny Marr and Jimmy Page are just two who've borrowed from Jansch, each enjoying a far more lucrative career than he ever did.

Jansch's fifth, sixth and seventh albums, now re-mastered, never enjoyed the same esteem as his 1965 debut or his work with folk-rock pioneers Pentangle. Yet time has mostly been kind to them.

Jansch's fifth album, *Nicola*, caught folk purists off-guard when it arrived in 1967. Compared to its predecessors, this was Jansch's pop album. But the Sgt Pepper-like strings and brass on *Woe Is Love My Dear* and *Life Depends On Love* sound a little forced.

Birthday Blues came two years later and was overshadowed at the time by Pentangle. It's the pick of the three, splicing bare-boned folk (*Tree Song*) with hard blues (*Poison*), and questioning lyrics by a writer trying to balance brutal honesty with his natural diffidence. There's real emotional conflict here.

Rosemary Lane (1971), meanwhile, mixes arcane folk and original material with the same unadorned production as his much-rated debut. Rock stardom could wait, though. Shortly after, Jansch gave up music for a time and moved to Wales to become a farmer. As frustratingly untogether as he often was, these albums mostly demonstrate just how brilliantly together he could be. MARK BLAKE

Download: *Nicola* | *Come Sing Me A Happy Song...* | *Poison* | *Promised Land*



The Fall (Brix Smith, far right) in 1985: "never disguises her neediness or lust for fame."

Book

THE RISE, THE FALL AND THE RISE

Brix Smith-Start

FABER & FABER, £14.99

Ex-Fall guitarist's memoir.

In 1983, Brix Smith left her family in Hollywood and moved in with her soon-to-be-husband, The Fall frontman Mark E Smith, in Manchester. This memoir details her life before Smith (essentially, troubled rich kid loses herself in music) and since (a relationship with violin-playing faux-lad Nigel Kennedy and TV stardom in Gok Wan's Fashion Fix). Brix never disguises her neediness or lust for fame, and is far tougher on herself than she is on anyone else. Inevitably, the story of her two stints in The Fall dominate. Mark E Smith's descent into speed-and-whisky-added violence is not a pretty tale. But their chalk-and-cheese relationship is brilliantly explored, even if the mental image of the "Hip Priest" rustling up a post-coital breakfast of black pudding in his grotty bachelor pad is one that's hard to shake. ★★★★★

MARK BLAKE

THE Q CULTURE LIST

Brix Smith's memoir, a history of LA punk rock, the story of Tower Records, Kate Tempest's first novel.

Book

UNDER THE BIG BLACK SUN: A PERSONAL HISTORY OF LA PUNK

JOHN DOE WITH TOM DeSAVIA AND FRIENDS

DA CAPO, OUT 12 MAY

Punk's other spiritual home gets a vivid reappraisal.

Under The Big Black Sun was devised to rescue the "mostly undocumented" LA punk scene of 1977 to 1982 from the shadows cast by New York and London. Co-authors John Doe (of seminal punks X) and music publisher Tom DeSavia do this brilliantly, compiling the personal recollections of the genre's key players. The result is not only an excellent dissection of the unique cultural and sexual plurality of the LA scene, but also its individual psychologies. In particular, Jane Wiedlin of The Go-Go's' account of surviving both her suicide attempt and the "Catholic damage" of her upbringing provides compelling reading. ★★★★★

GEORGE GARNER



"Tower's history was intimately connected with that of the record industry."

Film

ALL THINGS MUST PASS: THE RISE AND FALL OF TOWER RECORDS

The making of a counter culture: documentary tells sorry retail tale.

"One of the greatest tragedies of my life," is how Elton John describes the demise of Tower Records, the record-store chain that closed down in 2006 after 46 years of trading. The singer, who declares he spent more money in the store than "any other human being", might overstate the case, but

this documentary, directed by Tom Hanks's son Colin, does inspire an odd nostalgia for what was effectively a global retail giant. Founded by the charismatic Russ Solomon, Tower's history was intimately connected with that of the record industry, rising with the age of the album and MTV, going into free-fall with the internet age. Dave Grohl and Bruce Springsteen join John in remembering Tower's glory days, but behind the music lies a familiar corporate cautionary tale. ★★★★★

VICTORIA SEGAL

Book

THE BRICKS THAT BUILT THE HOUSES

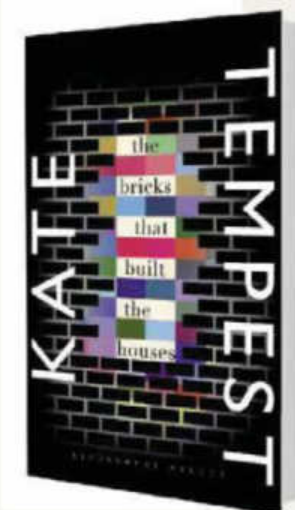
Kate Tempest

BLOOMSBURY, £14.99

The plot thickens: first novel from fierce poet and performer.

The characters in Kate Tempest's debut novel have little solid ground beneath them. They are under-employed and over-educated, hanging between zero-hours contracts or black economy manoeuvring. Their families are broken, their accommodation temporary, their dreams receding. Yet Harry, Pete and Becky – the South London residents who appeared on Tempest's 2014 Mercury-nominated album Everybody Down and the prime movers in this slightly awkward, slow-burning story of betrayal and escape – always feel like creatures of substance thanks to Tempest's compassionate, watchful writing. She is sensitive to the demoralised, the lost, those who are uneasy in their own skin and try what they can – sex, drugs, music – to make it fit better. It's a document of mean times, but it never loses its grace in the gloom. ★★★★★

VICTORIA SEGAL



THE ONE
TO BUY!

SHINE A LIGHT

Up for your consideration this month, some marvellously pointless speaker lights, a set of headphones that could make you look like Mr T and a great-sounding, terribly named soundbar. By NIALL DOHERTY...

← SENGLED PULSE £49.99

This is the sort of gadget I'm into: absolutely pointless. It's an LED lightbulb with a "hidden" wireless speaker, for all those times when you've turned the lights on in the living room and found yourself becoming absolutely furious that they don't play any music. You stream the music via Bluetooth and you can also control the brightness of the lights with a mobile app, which leads me to two words: disco party. ★★★★★

HOW WE TESTED

The products were tested in the Q office, apart from one which shall remain undisclosed until the court case is complete. Testing was interrupted once, by a mariachi band who had come to visit Closer magazine.

HOW WE RATED

Products were rated by their ease of use, quality and price. Special scores are given to products that really don't need to exist.



↑ DIVOOM VOOMBOX PARTY £99.99

Ah, the Divoom Voombox Party, or as I like to call it, the Div Party. You can take the Div Party anywhere, it's a handy portable little speaker with a battery life that will keep the party going for eight hours. After that, you'll have to take the party to the nearest plug socket or the party is over. The sound is a bit muffled, but it's a party, you'll be drunk, so you won't even care. ★★★★★



↑ ROTH SUB ZERO III £149.95

I'm sure Roth Audio did lots of testing on this soundbar, honing the six built-in drivers, reinforced polymer case and Bluetooth and analogue inputs. But they failed to do the most important test of all: does our new product sound like a film that would be shown on Men & Motors late at night, possibly starring Steven Seagal as a retired security guard who's also a martial arts expert? Oh, Roth Audio. The sound is great. The name not so much. ★★★★★



↑ PURE POP MIDI WITH BLUETOOTH £69

I think this little radio-speaker is designed to fit on a bedside table, because it's the perfect size to pick up and lob across the room when the alarm goes off. You could really get some good traction on it. It is a solid, reliable product and Pure radios always get a good signal. They also make a Mini version if you have tiny little weird hands, and a Maxi, if you're a giant. ★★★★★



↑ RHA T101 £149.95

I put these headphones in the wrong way at first and because they are made of stainless steel, I felt like my ears were doing weights and I looked a bit like Mr T. Then I read the instructions and got it sorted. The sound is punchy and not as tinny as other in-ear models. It also comes with tuning filters that change the sound to cater to your own personal tastes. But personally, when I buy a sandwich, I don't want to have to make it myself, you know? ★★★★★

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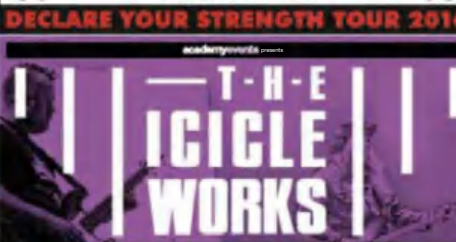
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LETTER OF THE MONTH

DARE TO SHARE

Dear Q, I was struck by the number of negative references to social media from your featured artists in last month's issue [Q358]. John Lydon, The Cult's Ian Astbury, Chvrches' Lauren Mayberry, Grimes... none of them had anything positive to say about it. If anything, it's led them to being far more wary about what they say and how they're judged. The unrelenting levels of scrutiny that social media affords does no one any favours, least of all us, the readers. Which makes the candid honesty of Matt Healy from Q358's cover stars The 1975 all the more refreshing. Long may it continue... Good luck, Matt. You'll need it!

Sarah Butler, via Q Mail



The 1975's Matt Healy: "refreshingly candid and honest." But for how long?

BOBBY'S FULL HOUSE

Congratulations, Q, on your brilliant Primal Scream retrospective in the last issue [Q358]. For me, and I'd imagine a lot of others, the Scream team were the Stones of the E generation. Yet they're not just of that time, as they have continued to evolve and adapt, and that's why they're still relevant 35 years after forming. How many bands can you say that about nowadays? They've consistently pushed musical boundaries and I put that down to Bobby Gillespie's

restless, creative spirit. And not only did you get him to talk openly about the past, you even managed to get him to – blimey! – smile at the end! Giving out, but not giving up, indeed.

Richard Ellis, via Q Mail

SPINE MESSAGE Q358

"I know nothing" is Manuel's catchphrase in Fawlty Towers, which came out in 1975, the name of Q358's cover stars. Qué? Barry Francis, Wrexham; Steve Loraine, Maidstone

Primal Scream's Bobby Gillespie: is that a wee smile we detect there?



The World of Q

Meet the world's best-travelled magazine!



Craig Miller, Georgetown, Guyana, South America



Eric and Olivia Stringer, and Julia Beudaert, Noumea, New Caledonia



Rebecca Marsden, Veligandu Island, Maldives

Caption Competition

WIN! An American Elite Telecaster, worth £1439

Q has teamed up with the fine, fine people at Fender to offer one reader the chance to win a gorgeous looking and equally beautiful sounding American Elite Telecaster, worth £1439.

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■ For more information, go to www.fender.com



Riff it up: an American Elite Telecaster, yesterday.



▲ THIS MONTH'S CAPTION CHALLENGE

Here's Guns N' Roses singer Axl Rose getting to grips with a monster from the deep. Send your entry – the funnier the better – including your address, to captioncomp@Qthemusic.com or on a postcard to the usual Q address. See below for more details. Closing date: 22 April 2016.



▲ Q357 THE WINNING CAPTION:

"Well, Damon's got Gorillaz so I've got, er... Sheepz."

Gary Law from Blackwood, Gwent came up with this gem and wins a Fender Paramount Acoustic guitar. Nice work, Gary!

To win, email your caption to: captioncomp@Qthemusic.com or post to the usual Q address before 23/04/16. One winner will be chosen by the panel. Winner will be notified, by email, 7-10 days after the closing date and must respond to Q within 14 days or another winner may be chosen. Q will not respond to questions about its chosen winner but will provide winners' names and the home towns, provided a request is made to the usual Q address and accompanied with a SAE. One entry per person and you must be over 18 and live in the UK. Prize is non-negotiable with no cash alternative. Personal data will be collected by Q and passed to prize provider to process entries. See <http://www.bauerdatapromise.co.uk/> for more details. Full T&Cs apply, see <http://www.bauerlegal.co.uk/competition-terms.html>. Any queries, email: QMail@Qthemusic.com

INSPECTOR GADGET

Good to see your Gadgets page back in the mag, Q. Your "gadgets guru" Niall Doherty is always on the money. When Richard Ayoade retires from C4's Gadget Man, Niall's a shoo-in to replace him...
Seamus Kenney, via Q Mail

BILL AND BECKS

Dear Q, loved your Cash For Questions with The Cult last issue [Q358]. Uncanny how much Billy Duffy looks like David Beckham these days – mean, moody, smouldering...
Jane Critchley, via Q Mail



The Cult's Billy Duffy and David Beckham: "smouldering."

SOUND AS A POUND

Dear Q, thanks so much for your New Adventures In Sound CD [cover-mounted on Q358]. After repeated listening, I have now discovered the brilliant Kevin Morby and Yak. More please!
Rachael Whitting, Ipswich

ELVIS COSTELLO

“WITHOUT MY GLASSES ON I LOOK LIKE A MURDERER!”

How bad eyes and gappy teeth shaped the singer-songwriter...



W

hen was the last time you went to Chelsea?

I saw Liverpool get beaten there a few years ago. Funnily enough, in the late '60s I used to go just to see football. Fulham one week; Chelsea the next, because I lived in Twickenham [*South West London*]. At Fulham you could support the away team for a laugh, Chelsea I wouldn't have tried that, there were girls there you wouldn't want to fight. But I'd go, just to see a game.

When was the last time someone called you Declan?

All my family call me that and some friends. Not my band, they've always called me EC. I don't respond when strangers walk up and use it, trying to be familiar. It's for people who knew me before I had the other identity.

When was the last time you drank R White's Lemonade?

I don't think I ever drank it actually! They didn't send it round after the advert [*Costello and his dad sang on the theme tune to the R White's advert*]. It's really curious how that ad keeps coming up. Only a handful of those jingles have survived, like

Shake n' Vac, and I happen to sing backing vocals on one of them! My dad used to sing a lot of ads, for him it was another day in the office, but for me it was a bit of luck. I was 17 and they needed that kind of voice. To be honest, it wasn't much but the cheque was handy a few times between '73 and '78.

When was the last time you lost your glasses?

It's embarrassing but I'm always doing that. My eyesight is peculiar in that I can read without them but because I'm short-sighted I stare when I look ahead. Without them I look like I should be on a post office wall: "Have you seen this man?" I look like a murderer. Usually, I'll have been reading and they'll be on top of my head.

When was the last time you cooked a meal for someone?

It was dinner for my lads, my nine-year-olds. Salmon, I think. My wife [*singer Diana Krall*] is probably a better cook but she's on tour at the moment. Although it's not like there's two urchins with their noses pressed up against the glass going: "When's mum coming home?" I get by as a cook. I've never poisoned anybody... unless it was on purpose! [*Laughs*]

When was the last time you asked someone for their autograph?

I asked Gregory Peck for his autograph when I was about 10. He was filming in the local park. He was very nice. I think it was Arabesque with Sophia Loren.

When was the last time you went to the dentist?

I didn't go for years and I lived to regret it, but now I'm pretty good. They ask if you're going to get that new smile, but it's not going to happen! If I did that it would change the way I sound. The gap in your front teeth affects the way you sing, a lot of air goes through it. Think about [*other gap-toothed singers*] Ray Davies and Jane Birkin, Madonna too. When you think Madonna, you think me! [*Laughs*] Actually, she says she learnt to play the drums by playing along to Pump It Up! You didn't know that, did you? 🇬🇧

■ *Elvis Costello plays four nights at London's Palladium, starting 10 May.*

Elvis Costello:
"Did we have to take the photos in the public lavatory?"

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